

**REDMOND PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

January 16, 2013

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

**COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED:** Commissioner O'Hara

**STAFF PRESENT:** Jeff Churchill, Redmond Planning Department, Eric  
McConaghy, Redmond Planning Department, Cathy  
Beam, Redmond Planning Department, Sarah  
Stiteler, 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:**

Ms. Marsha McGee addressed the Planning Commission regarding issues of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how it affects planning. She says she has a hard time getting around Redmond with her walker or shopping cart. She has multiple sclerosis and noted that many people have walkers or other mobility devices in Redmond. She said offices and buildings should be considerate of the ADA, and asked for special attention to the Park and Ride lots and bus route access point. She asked the Commission to consider pedestrians of all abilities and also what the City wants to promote in terms of a green, pedestrian-friendly environment. She would like people to reconsider the area around the Park and Ride lot and bus route 245 between 152<sup>nd</sup> and 156<sup>th</sup>. She asked that the easement in this area to and from the Park and Ride should be maintained. She said that tax revenue could be gained from this corridor, as many Microsoft employees use this area for shopping and eating.

Ms. McGee added that many people with handicaps live in that area, and the easement is used as a pedestrian-friendly walkway to and from the bus routes. She was concerned her access would be denied due to developer interest in the area, and noted that the easement was there first. She said the City should consider any cutting off of this easement by developers as an ADA violation. She noted that a lot of people, not just the disabled, use this easement. She noted that flat surfaces are needed in this area for wheelchairs and said having this paved area was of vital interest to the City.

Ms. McGee noted that the Park and Ride is in place for all taxpayers, and access to it is critical. Having the paved easement in place is a safe way for all pedestrians to get through, including the disabled. She said a developer could build on the other side of it without destroying it, and asked why the City had not asserted its eminent domain over that easement. She added that there were some nice trees along the paved easement that she would not like to see destroyed. She thanked the Commission members for their time.

Commissioner Biethan said this was a valid question and wanted to make sure the City could answer Ms. McGee's concerns. He noted this might not be a Planning Commission issue. Ms. McGee was concerned about some no trespassing signs apparently put up by a developer that she believes violates the public easement. Commissioner Miller said that ADA is civil rights legislation, not transportation or land use legislation. He asked if Redmond had been through an ADA audit recently, which is a long process. He asked what provisions the City had in place in its Code for preservation of pedestrian and ADA access during construction. Ms. Stiteler said staff would research this issue and get back to the Commission.

Mr. Bob Yoder of Redmond spoke next to the Commission with some concerns about public notice. He said the yellow proposed land use notice boards, on construction sites Downtown, are pretty hard to figure out. He said some cranes working on sites Downtown do not have the proposed land use signs. He suggested it would be nice to have the signs up to allow the public to get more engaged in the process. He added that there is a lack of engagement in the design review of certain buildings. Chairman Gregory thanked Mr. Yoder for his comments. Commissioner Chandorkar asked staff if Mr. Yoder's concern was an enforcement issue. Ms. Stiteler said that she would look into this question. Seeing no further items from the audience, Chairman Gregory closed this part of the meeting.

**STUDY SESSION AND PUBLIC HEARING, Overlake State Environmental Policy (SEPA) Planned Action Update**, presented by Jeff Churchill, City of Redmond Planning Department.

Mr. Churchill said this was a relatively minor amendment to the City's Zoning Code, but it does involve some provisions of state law that the Commission does not often look at. He said that *planned actions* are a part of the state Environmental Policy Act that allow a community to take a look at the environmental impacts that will occur over time as a result of a plan, such as a neighborhood plan, in the Overlake example. The idea is to look at the cumulative impacts of the plan over time and give the community a way of seeing the impacts disclosed and understanding how the impacts could be mitigated at the beginning of a planning period. While the plan is under development and as the environmental impacts are reviewed and disclosed, mitigation is identified and then a preferred action (plan adoption) plan is implemented.

Thus, applicants for projects can request *planned action coverage*, which means that if a project is consistent with a plan, and if it is going to have environmental impacts that have already been disclosed in the environmental document, and if mitigation action has

been identified, then there is no additional requirement to do further environmental review. The idea is that the environmental review has been done. Redmond has one Planned Action, which is for the Overlake area, including the Overlake Business and Advanced Technology Zone and the Overlake Village Zones, which are basically the non-single family and non-multi-family residential areas of Overlake.

The Overlake Planned Action was established in 1999. At that time, the City of Redmond and Bellevue were working on the Bellevue, Redmond, and Overlake Transportation Study known as BROTS. That looked at transportation on a sub-regional basis in many parts of Bellevue and Redmond, but part of that was an Overlake Neighborhood Plan update. As part of that, the City established a Planned Action. It was updated once in 2009 to incorporate the Neighborhood Plan Update environmental documents that were completed in 2007. Currently, the Overlake SEPA Planned Action has a catalog of environmental documents that go through 2007, when the last big neighborhood plan update was done for Overlake.

The Planned Action Update would amend the language in Chapter 70 of the Redmond Zoning Code, which is the SEPA chapter. The update would add to a list of environmental documents that are part of the Planned Action. There are two documents now, including the 1999 integrated SEPA/Growth Management Act documents and the final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) from 2007. The Update would add three other documents that have been completed since then, including an addendum to the SEIS that was done in 2010 for the Stormwater and Parks Facilities Implementation Plan. In 2010, the City completed this implementation plan for Overlake Village, and as part of that, the City published an addendum, which is one of the many environmental documents under SEPA that can be prepared for an action such as a plan. In 2011, there was a Group Health Overlake Master Plan Development and Development Agreement. As part of that, the applicant prepared an addendum for that Master Plan. For the update to the Planned Action itself, there is an addendum that goes along with it.

Mr. Churchill noted that the difference between an addendum and an EIS is that an addendum is providing new or updated information that does not change the basic analysis of the EIS. Thus, the addendum does not introduce new kinds of impacts or significant changes to the analysis done previously. Addenda's are not as wide-ranging and do not disclose new impacts. The update under consideration at this meeting would add the three addenda noted above to the Planned Action catalog of environmental documents. The reason staff is recommending this action, and the reason why the Overlake Planned Action was put together, was discussed in the Technical Committee Report and is found in Ordinance 2025, which was adopted in 1999.

The idea of the Planned Action Update is to increase the efficiency and reduce public costs of plan implementation while protecting the environment and the high quality of life in the region. Mr. Churchill said the Update is about providing thorough and efficient environmental review. Keeping the review documents up to date allows the City to continue to implement the plan properly. New addenda come along as more studies reveal new information that can be added to the Planned Action.

Commissioner Miller clarified that the Planned Action could increase efficiency taking review from a project-by-project approach to an EIS approach. Mr. Churchill agreed that SEPA review, in most part of the City, is done on a project basis. Commissioner Miller asked if the Planned Update would use SEPA studies done previously, such that qualifying projects would be exempt from a determination and exempt from the requirement to do their own EIS. Mr. Churchill said that in ordinary circumstances a project will come in with associated SEPA documentation, a checklist that discloses what the project is and what impacts it expects to have. That would happen with any project that comes in for Planned Action coverage, as well. A checklist is still prepared. The lead agency which is the City in this case, would make a determination of whether those impacts on a particular project have already been evaluated under the larger EIS. Commissioner Miller clarified that the Technical Committee is the lead administrator in cases such as this. Mr. Churchill said the Committee would be the SEPA responsible officials.

Commissioner Miller asked, if a project qualifies for the Planned Action, meaning the project impacts are believed to be covered by previous Environmental Impact Statements, if that project would no longer be subject to a project-based SEPA review. Mr. Churchill said that would be correct, except for the determination of Planned Action coverage is the review process. He added that the EIS that is prepared for a Planned Action is a special kind of EIS in that it has to evaluate the impacts of all projects that could go on under the sub-area plan. A project EIS, normally, is looking at a single project. Sometimes, an EIS will look at just a plan and not be intended as a Planned Action. A Planned Action, Mr. Churchill, takes a deeper look at environmental issues.

Commissioner Miller said he saw the rationale of taking very similar EIS reviews in a certain area to make the planning process more efficient. He was concerned about removing the public comment period that goes with an individual EIS. Mr. Churchill said most projects in Redmond that are single developments, such as in Downtown, would not have an EIS, but there may be a comment period on the SEPA checklist. Commissioner Miller asked if that would happen in Overlake under the Planned Action. Mr. Churchill said, with a Planned Action, there would not be a comment period. Commissioner Miller said that was not a minor issue. He continued that, in the report, it was noted that a 60-day notice for comment was sent to state agencies 32 days ago. Mr. Churchill said the state agencies have not responded. Commissioner Miller asked if the Commission would be able to see that response from the state before a vote was taken on this issue. Mr. Churchill said if anything comes in, it would be presented to the Commission. However, it is typical that the state would not respond in such a case.

Commissioner Miller asked about BROTS, which is now 13 years old, and how it was the underpinning for this issue. Mr. Churchill said it was not BROTS itself, but rather the integrated SEPA/Growth Management Act document that went with it that is guiding the discussion. Mr. Churchill said it was possible that the Planning Commission would take a vote before the 60-day notice for comment period passes. The 60-day rule means 60 days between the time the City notified the state agencies and when the Council adopts a

change to the Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Code. The Commission could decide not to take a vote until 60 days have passed. Commissioner Miller wanted to make sure the Commission knew what state agencies are saying about this issue.

Chairman Gregory opened the public hearing on the issue. Tom Hinman, 6528 159<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Redmond, spoke to the Commission first. He said he generally supported the concept of a SEPA Planned Action, since it provides for more coherent and efficient planning and conserves both public agency and private developer time and resources. However, he did not believe that current planning is compliant with the Redmond Comprehensive Plan provisions of FW-28 regarding Overlake. The staff report states that updating the Overlake SEPA Planned Action will facilitate implementation of the Overlake Neighborhood Plan, which is encapsulated in FW-27 and FW-28. The second half of FW-28 reads, *retain the character of nearby residential neighborhoods and enhance a green character within the area through additional parks, street trees, and landscaping as well as retention of significant trees and other natural features.*

Mr. Hinman said the concluding part of this statement is no longer honored by City planners and said it was ironic that this agenda item should happen right before a tree regulation hearing for the Planning Commission. He challenged the Commission to reconcile FW-28 as it currently appears in the Comprehensive Plan with the consistency requirements found in the proposed SEPA Planned Action Amendment at paragraphs D1 and E2D. He thanked the Commission members for their time. With no further public comments on this issue, Chairman Gregory closed the oral public hearing. With the consent of the Commission, Chairman Gregory decided to extend the written portion of the public hearing until the next meeting of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Chandorkar said that Commissioner Miller had raised many questions for discussion. Commissioner Biethan said he liked having a transparent and clear process to development. Also, at the same time, he was concerned about something that would not allow for public comment. Chairman Gregory had no particular comments, but did say the issue of whether Planned Action Updates are sufficient or not, in the context of a larger EIS and related items, is worth more clarification, especially in light of the comments from Mr. Hinman about a potential conflict with the City's Comprehensive Plan, specifically FW-28. Chairman Gregory would like Mr. Hinman's concern placed on the issues matrix for staff clarification. Commissioner Murray added that the public comment indicated that the Commission was acting in an inconsistent way, but the concrete examples of inconsistent actions were not clear. He would like some analysis on how to remain consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Chairman Gregory tabled the discussion of the Planned Action Update and noted the discussion would continue at the Planning Commission's next meeting on January 23<sup>rd</sup> with written public comment open until that time. Mr. Churchill asked for clarification of Commissioner Miller's concerns. Commissioner Miller asked Mr. Churchill to talk about public comments and how the Planned Action Update would impact those comments in a typical project review. He was also concerned about the age of some of the underlying plans that are informing the discussion, particularly on the transportation front. He did

not want to see citizens of Redmond lose an opportunity through this process to participate in the review of projects that affect them. Commissioner Murray said that there were two issues: one regarding process and one regarding the impact of particular statements on a project. Commissioner Miller said that accurately described his concerns.

Mr. Churchill asked for clarification of Commissioner Miller and Commissioner Murray's concerns. Commissioner Murray said there is a concern about the process of allowing these addenda after a plan is put in place. There is also a concern regarding the scope of the Planned Action Update and whether it would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Churchill asked for more clarification. Commissioner Murray asked if the Overlake SEPA Planned Action has addenda getting added to it that address new agreements and new actions. Mr. Churchill said the addenda incorporate new environmental information. Commissioner Murray asked if that information fundamentally supports or does not support the Planned Action. Mr. Churchill said the information is entirely separate from the Planned Action. The information is related to the underlying EIS. When an addendum is written, a change or addition is made to an EIS that has already been published. The rule for an addendum is that it can only be done if the information getting added does not change the analysis of the EIS. If information did change, a supplemental EIS would be needed. Commissioner Murray said the issue was now clearer to him, and his concern was now less about the impact of the EIS but rather the process that Commissioner Miller spoke of.

Chairman Gregory said the intent is to provide up to date tools as the City continues to implement the plan to develop the Overlake area. This includes updated environmental information or whatever data is necessary without going back to the original EIS process. Mr. Churchill said when the Council adopted the Overlake Neighborhood Plan in 1999, the Council also adopted a way of reviewing projects to be consistent with that plan. That is the concept of *planned action*, and the specific tool is the SEPA Planned Action for reviewing the environmental component of a project. Commissioner Miller said this is a different way of approaching the way the Commission deals with environmental review on individual projects in the Overlake area. Mr. Churchill said the proposal would keep the information in the Planned Action current. Commissioner Sanders asked if the Planned Action policy had a lifespan. Mr. Churchill said the Planned Action expires in 2030.

Mr. Churchill noted that Mr. Hinman's concern deals with consistency between the Neighborhood Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. When the City Council adopted the Neighborhood Plan, Mr. Churchill said it was determined that the Neighborhood Plan was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan overall. He will explore this topic further in the issues matrix. Commissioner Biethan said he understood a project-by-project SEPA process. He clarified that an area with common environmental elements could be delineated in certain neighborhoods that would apply to certain projects, thus allowing an applicant to avoid going through the entire SEPA process. Mr. Churchill said that was a correct assessment. Commissioner Biethan clarified further that the Planned Action process was in place already and that the Commission would not be putting a new process in place. He asked if the proposal was an update of component information

within this process, which Mr. Churchill agreed to, as well. Commissioner Biethan said he was all for transparency, but noted that because the process of Planned Action is already in place, addressing how it gets done should not have to be covered by the Commission. Mr. Churchill confirmed that the Commission would not be changing the process of planned action. With that in mind, Commissioner Biethan was not sure that the issue matrix item would be on this question.

Commissioner Miller asked if the Master Plan on the Group Health side was done using a Planned Action process. Mr. Churchill said the SEPA review process was a checklist and the City issued an addendum. Commissioner Miller said he was reacting to the process and said it was the Commission's duty to review this process. Commissioner Biethan clarified that Commissioner Miller's question was whether the Commission review the process, not a question about the process itself. Commissioner Miller said he understood why the City was involved in the Planned Action process as a matter of efficiency, but was concerned about the lack of comment involved on certain projects contained in the Planned Action area. Commissioner Biethan said that was a valid question and always respected Commissioner Miller's questions. Commissioner Miller said he wanted to know more about the Planned Action process. Commissioner Murray said the Commission should not be looking at the overall process in light of the actual proposal before them, which involves updating information for the Planned Action. That does not mean that the process is not worth looking at, but that is not what the Commission has been asked to do.

Commissioner Miller said, at times, a Commission has an obligation to dissect processes like Planned Actions. He noted that the proposal before the Commission was relatively minor, but given the questions raised by the Commission over this process, he wanted to take some time before casting a vote. Chairman Gregory asked the Commission to move on to the next discussion item and thanked Commissioner Biethan for clarifying the proposal.

**PUBLIC HEARING AND STUDY SESSION, Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan Amendments for Tree Removal Exceptions and Definition of Technical Committee**, presented by Eric McConaghy and Cathy Beam, City of Redmond Planning Department

Mr. McConaghy gave an overview of the topic to the Commission and the public. The applicant for these amendments is Citizens and Neighbors for a Sustainable Redmond. The person leading this effort is former Planning Commissioner Chairman Tom Hinman. This packet of amendments includes one Comprehensive Plan amendment, which would add a definition of the Technical Committee to the glossary of the Comprehensive Plan. The Zoning Code amendments would also add the definition of the Technical Committee to the Zoning Code and also revise provisions regarding tree protection exceptions and land use notifications when tree exceptions are requested. This includes a requested change in the way the City does notice boards both large and small. The requested amendments would add a neighborhood meeting to consider tree removal exceptions. Also, public comment is requested to be added to the process by which the Planning

Director would make a decision on tree removal exceptions. The proposal would also change the replacement ratios for trees in urban centers and impose a tree retention percentage “floor”, meaning what percentage of trees would have to be retained on a project under exceptions.

Mr. McConaghy divided the issue into three parts:

1. **Public Participation:** Dealing with the notice boards, the neighborhood meeting and public comments for tree removal exceptions.
2. **Numbers and Data:** The amendment proposes removal of the provision that allows for a one to one tree replacement for master plans in urban centers. In addition, the applicant proposes tree retention exception “floor” numbers of 50% for landmark trees, which are 30 inches in diameter when measured 4.5 feet from the ground (diameter at breast height or DBH). Retention numbers would be 20% for significant trees, which are six inches DBH.
3. **Defining the Technical Committee:** The applicant has asked that the definition describe the membership of the Committee, the decision process of the Committee, and how the Committee reports to the Planning and Parks Departments.

Mr. McConaghy said the Technical Committee report, which came to the Commission prior to last week’s meeting, contains the staff recommendation on this proposal. In summary:

1. **Public Participation:** Staff has recommended no changes, in that the existing regulations and permit process, in staff’s view, do provide for meaningful public participation.
2. **Numbers and Data:** The staff recommends no changes, in light of the rationale that the existing regulations are effective.
3. **Defining the Technical Committee:** Staff is recommending removing this definition from the glossary of the Comprehensive Plan and instead providing a link to the Redmond Municipal Code (RMC). Staff noted that while the Comprehensive Plan amendments were moving forward, there was a large collection of tune-ups to the glossary. The definition of the Technical Committee was included in that tune-up, and the definition provided in the Comprehensive Plan right now is incomplete. It does not include all of the parts of the Technical Committee that are in the RMC. The new code documents have electronic links to source documents. Thus, the staff is hoping to honor what the applicant is looking for, which is an explanation of what the Technical Committee is, by linking directly to the RMC.

Ms. Beam showed the Commission some slides regarding the Technical Committee. It is the Director of Planning and Community Development Department and the Public Works Director. She called the Technical Committee a staff meeting that is convened at the discretion of the two Directors. Building officials and City engineers can be involved, as well as fire chiefs, police chiefs, planners and others. Typically, a stormwater engineer

and traffic engineer are involved. The Committee is thus a collection of staff, meeting to go over project proposals to make sure that all the city regulations are being met and addressed consistently. Coordinating the different impacts of projects is the focus of the meeting. The Technical Committee makes decisions on Type II permits, which involve site plan entitlements and short plats, for example. The Committee also makes recommendations to the Planning Commission, the Council, Hearings Examiner, and Mayor on non-administrative land use actions, policy documents, and regulations. The Technical Committee also implements SEPA and are the Responsible Officials for signing SEPA documents and issuing threshold determinations.

Commissioner Biethan asked for a clarification on the definition of the Technical Committee requested by the applicant. Mr. McConaghy reiterated that the applicant wanted the definition of the Technical Committee included in the glossary of the Comprehensive Plan, including details on membership, decision process, and whom the Committee reports to. Commissioner Chandorkar read the proposal from the applicant, which asked that the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code should each contain an explanation of the Technical Committee as described above.

Commissioner Chandorkar asked why staff thought it was important to remove the definition from the glossary and link it elsewhere. He asked why the Technical Committee definition could not be linked from the glossary itself, in that readers would refer to the glossary first. Ms. Beam noted that with the Technical Committee, the rules and procedures are set forth by the City Council, and under that authority, that information is held in the Redmond Municipal Code. The staff concern over having a definition in the Comprehensive Plan is that this is not the official definition. Plus, the definition of the Technical Committee created during the Comprehensive Plan update is not consistent with the Municipal Code definition. The RMC definition is the official definition, and using an electronic link would point to one definition rather than multiple definitions in multiple documents. Commissioner Chandorkar asked if the term could be left in the glossary and linked from that spot to the RMC. Mr. McConaghy said that would make sense.

Chairman Gregory opened the public hearing on this issue. He acknowledged written public testimony from Tom Hinman, Yvonne Wong and Cindy Jayne on behalf of Citizens and Neighbors for Sustainable Redmond. Mr. Hinman had inserted public comments into a copy of the Commission's issues matrix as part of his proposal.

Mr. Hinman made some introductory remarks, joined by Kathe Low and Bob Berg. Ms. Low spoke first, and noted she was a co-chair of Sustainable Redmond and a volunteer with the Sierra Club and her homeowner's association. She said she was passionate about protecting natural resources. She thanked the staff and Commission for the opportunity to provide amendment suggestions and for the work done to evaluate these suggestions. She thanked Mr. McConaghy for bringing some clarity to Redmond's tree preservation ordinances. She said that it appears Redmond leads the way in protecting natural resources, but that there is always room for improvement.

Ms. Low said the staff report evaluating the Sustainable Redmond proposals states that existing regulations and the permit process provide for meaningful public participation. However, she said that the majority of the regulations are about notification, which is not the same as participation and does not guarantee participation. She said attending hearings and neighborhood meetings requires residents to see the notices and be given enough details about a proposal to become interested in participating. Ms. Low said that when she picked up information packets from some of the yellow notice boards, those packets contained helpful data. She said the boards would need to have enough detail so that the data jumps out at citizens and inspires involvement.

Such involvement is important to Redmond, as noted in the Comprehensive Plan's sustainability principles. In that document, it is noted that public participation is vital to the City. One principle states the following: *In Redmond, a sustainable community means recognizing the importance of community awareness, education, and engagement.* Also, as noted in the public participation handout, Redmond believes that informed citizens are desirable in the planning process. The handout says the following: *Public participation helps by informing the City of issues that may not have been initially addressed, considered significant, or known before. Public participation can therefore lead to better solutions and decisions being made by all parties.* Ms. Low said this point was proven true in the process of directing development in southeast Redmond. Mr. Churchill organized neighborhood meetings in this area, which allowed innovative ideas to be involved early on within the planning process.

Despite these sentiments and the City's intention to improve communication, Ms. Low noted that figures from the most recent citizen survey highlight three trends she called disturbing. Only 52% of Redmond residents agree that the City is open to community ideas and willing to act on them. Just 68% of residents feel the City does a good or excellent job about keeping residents informed about City issues, and 38% of Redmond residents do not feel connected to their community. Ms. Low said this is why the amendments have been proposed, to better inform the community about pending land use actions, especially those that propose exceptions to tree retention. Sustainable Redmond is hoping to help the City in the effort to improve communication with residents.

Ms. Low continued that the staff report claims that the existing tree protection regulations are effective. She said that many of these regulations are leading edge, she respectfully disagreed that they were effective when it comes to tree protection exceptions. She noted that a 100% clear cut of trees is not a desirable situation on any property, regardless of future mitigation measures. She said that mature trees are far more valuable in terms of aesthetics, environmental service, and resident health than saplings. This understanding is in the City's code documents, but Ms. Low suggested that it was not fully respected in actual practice. Thus, Sustainable Redmond has proposed a tree protection amendment to provide a firm floor for tree retention.

Regarding the Technical Committee, Ms. Low said the membership of the Committee is well documented. She is looking for more transparency with regard to the process by which decisions are made, the criteria used to make those decisions, and how decisions

are reported to the Planning Commission and the Parks Department. She thanked the Commission again for hearing her concerns. Commissioner Chandorkar noted that in the process of going through a project, the report of the Technical Committee typically comes to the Planning Commission and then on to the City Council. At both these occasions, there are public comments taken and public hearings held. He asked if she believed that process was not sufficient or too late in the process for true public participation. Ms. Low said Mr. Hinman could address that topic more specifically.

Mr. Hinman said that opportunities are built into the system for public comment, but said that the public at large does not have an understanding of what happens behind closed doors. He noted that the City must hear the concerns of residents early in the process so that developers have the predictability and certainty they need just as much as residents are entitled to predictability and certainty about changes in their neighborhoods. He noted that his amendments focused on undeveloped property and developed lots other than single-family residential. He said that single-family lots and commercial forest practices should not be considered in these amendments.

Mr. Hinman made his comments in relation to Mr. McConaghy's statements from last week's meeting. With regard to public participation, Mr. Hinman said that public notice is not synonymous with public participation. He said the manner by which the public is notified is crucial. Mr. Hinman said that even when Redmond follows all applicable state laws, there is no guarantee that meaningful participation will result. He said that some innovation was needed to get that participation. Regarding notice boards, staff has said that the tree exceptions are only one component of this that could affect the permitting process, and therefore staff could not add a line or check box to the notice boards in that the size of the letters would become too small and create visual clutter. Mr. Hinman submitted that if something unusual is planned for a property, that fact should be highlighted and not obscured. Adding a line to help guide readers is not visual clutter. He was concerned also that many notice board boxes have no flyers at all.

Regarding neighborhood meetings, Mr. Hinman noted that the Technical Committee report states that the City's approach for neighborhood meetings reflects the public's desire for input to land use actions and residential areas. Mr. Hinman questioned that notion, and said that the Neighborhood Plan Update and community outreach process is good for general inputs on a neighborhood's future, but they are not responsive to the comments on specific land use actions. Mr. Hinman noted that the Technical Committee has discretion and *may require neighborhood meetings for site plan entitlements*, but suggests those meetings could be duplicative and might set a precedent for other permit types. Bottom line, Mr. Hinman wanted to err on the side of encouraging meaningful public participation by providing for more neighborhood conversations instead of fewer.

Mr. Hinman said tree protection exception regulations should not be granted lightly. He said that administrators' decisions should demonstrate that public voices have been heard during administrative deliberations. There are opportunities for comment, but they are not clearly stated to the uninitiated, online or otherwise. Even the fact sheets on the

permitting process and opportunities for public comment, Mr. Hinman said, are difficult to discover on the City's website.

He continued that the E-Track permitting program in Redmond should make land use permit actions, including tree protection programs, more accessible to the public. Mr. Hinman's group would like to work further with the City to improve that access. He asked about the availability of projects in a chronological search protocol and the availability of former actions and archives. He noted that projects can stall for some years and potentially get lost in the system. He said that determining the fate of stalled projects and sending notice about how they might be re-started are other facets of public notice that could use better explanation.

Mr. Hinman moved to tree retention and replacement ratios. He said that the Technical Committee report contains a laudable goal of no net loss of trees in Redmond. Mr. Hinman's group applauds that goal, but notes that it does not address the qualitative difference between mature trees and smaller or younger mitigation plantings. He said that numbers alone do not account for the ability of the tree cover to sequester carbon, clean the air, contain stormwater runoff, improve water quality, provide habitat, and bring a sense of tranquility to neighborhoods. Cindy Jayne has submitted a letter on this topic and the following two amendments that she helped craft. She argued for no lower replacement ratios for master plans in urban centers.

Mr. Hinman spoke to the topic of urban centers. Sustainable Redmond agrees that compact, walkable, family-friendly urban centers are the best way for the community to grow, in that they conserve natural resources by reducing sprawl. He also accepted that urban centers would be a focal point for future housing capacity. However, the way the centers develop needs to respect existing residents and businesses. While many communities generally accept urban centers, there is a tension between the affected neighborhood and benefits for greater Redmond. The neighborhood affected by a development project is impacted by reduced ecological values when trees are removed and particularly when mitigation is allowed at distant receiving sites. Mr. Hinman expressed a desire for proximate mitigation. He would like the Technical Committee's reference to healthy urban green space to serve the immediate neighborhood rather than a mitigation area across town. He asked if there was a financial benefit to developers by lowering replacement ratios and allowing offsite mitigation far beyond the affected neighborhood.

Regarding the provision lowering the replacement ratio for master plans and urban centers, Sustainable Redmond is opposed to this piece of Code, in that urban centers need a forested oasis as much, if not more, than suburban neighborhoods. This provision was added to the Community Development Guide as the Redmond Zoning Code was adopted in 2011. Sustainable Redmond would like to know the origin of this amendment, which Mr. Hinman believes exceeds the authority of the Code Rewrite Commission and emerged just as a master plan was being processed containing major tree retention changes to the community vision for an affected neighborhood.

Mr. Hinman wished to understand the implications of new state rules regarding development in urban centers germane to both the proposed amendments and the ones that follow. The Technical Committee report, in items B3 and B10, references recently adopted legislation that has not been publicly reviewed in Redmond in adjusting the threshold for categorical exemptions to SEPA in urban centers. Mr. Hinman believed this was deserving of public conversation beyond the proposed amendments.

On the subject of the minimum replacement percentages for trees, Mr. Hinman noted that the Technical Committee states that setting a minimum replacement percentage, with regard to exceptions, would introduce a new minimum for tree retention. The proposed amendment from Sustainable Redmond is not intended to add ambiguity, but rather find a way to implement a floor or safety net when the retention standards of 100% landmark trees and 35% significant trees cannot be met. The exceptions granted, he said, should not drop to zero. The proposed minimum replacement percentages of 50% and 20%, respectively, may seem arbitrary. Mr. Hinman said there could be a formula for tree retention that might be appropriate, and stressed that he wanted to avoid future clear cuts. The proposed amendments seek to start that conversation.

Mr. Hinman spoke next about the definition of the Technical Committee. He said that the Technical Committee report recommends the definition of the Committee should be linked to the RMC where it can be explained more completely and removed from the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Hinman said that does not answer the questions about composition, decision process, or manner of reporting. He said this appears to be a closed system, in that the Committee chooses when, where, and with whom they meet in accordance with rules the Technical Committee members wrote themselves subject to City Council approval but not readily available to the public. In theory, the Technical Committee does not decide on policy, but the cumulative impact of the Committee is very significant with strong policy implications for the City. For that reason, and to build community confidence in unbiased decision-making, Sustainable Redmond has proposed that the Technical Committee meetings should be announced and open to the public.

Bob Berg from Sustainable Redmond spoke next. He said that, in a companion effort to the Comprehensive Plan amendment proposals, Sustainable Redmond has two action steps to propose. Sustainable Redmond intends to convene a community-based stakeholder group to proactively address tree protection and other natural resource conservation matters in a collaborative, non-confrontational fashion before they reach critical levels. The group would invite participation by City staff and hope that developers would find this to be a convenient means to get informal citizen feedback on future projects. This group would also be a focal point for mitigation planning, restoration, parks development, and sustaining natural resources.

Like the City, Sustainable Redmond has high hopes for the success of E-Track as an accessible way for citizens to follow the development permitting process so that they can offer public comment at appropriate times. Some Sustainable Redmond members will be learning about E-Track content and functionality to determine if it meets the needs of the general public. Sustainable Redmond would like to work with development review staff

to identify any sticking points and help educate interested parties on the value of E-Track. Finally, Sustainable Redmond thanked City staff for their professionalism in working to bring these amendments forward.

Commissioner Miller asked about the neighborhood meeting part of the Sustainable Redmond proposal, and if such a meeting would be triggered if tree exemptions were involved. Mr. Hinman said that was close to the proposal, and said it would be encompassed in existing meeting formats and would not occur frequently, in that tree exceptions are rare. Commissioner Miller said this point could be more comprehensive, in that other exemptions could be involved in a project beyond tree exceptions, such as non-motorized transportation or low-income housing. He was concerned about setting a precedent surrounding tree exceptions to trigger a meeting. Commissioner Miller asked if there was a way to accomplish this proposal in a more comprehensive way. Mr. Hinman said that would be acceptable, and he has heard the precedent comment from staff before. He did not want to bring development to a halt. Mr. Hinman wanted to find an efficient way to have the public learn about and comment on certain projects.

Commissioner Biethan asked if the last proposal dealt with a process offered by Sustainable Redmond involving stakeholders, developers, and City staff to comment on the public process. Mr. Hinman clarified that this point was about whether there would be some value in creating a clearinghouse for development issues and conservation. Specifically, Sustainable Redmond is talking about tree retention. Mr. Hinman said Sustainable Redmond was currently convening a conservation planning group that could involve the City as a partner. The City has not been interested in getting involved in this issue, but that does not stop the public from working on it. Mr. Hinman would like to hear from the City on how his group could work on public engagement and communication.

Chairman Gregory asked for more public testimony. Ms. Rianne BeCraft spoke next to the Commission. She is the founder of Redmond Wild, a volunteer group that provides community members with resources on how to create wildlife-friendly urban spaces. She is proud to be from Redmond, but says that these days, there appears to be less of a balance between gray and green. She is concerned about housing complexes being built everywhere around the City. She does not want Redmond to be a drab city of cement that does not stand out to people, and she is concerned about losing urban trees. She said she was not against urban growth or business, as her family runs a business in Redmond. She values business, a thriving economy, and a citizen's right to live in a healthy community with the benefits of natural spaces and trees. She is hoping to find a balance between business and environmental concerns, but believes this balance is not a priority in Redmond.

She noted that tree loss is a major SEPA measurement that is an easily quantifiable, visible indicator of environmental impact. She said Redmond is a gem with urban and green spaces, which is a key reason why people live in the City. That, she said, is why people want to know at the very beginning of the permit application process what will happen to trees on a project site. She said that trees are proven to provide ecological,

economic, and health services for free. Repeated studies have shown that trees provide a close connection to nature as well as emotional and mental health benefits.

Ms. BeCraft has a bachelor's degree in environmental science, and has done a lot of in-depth research on this topic. She said it was outrageous that she cannot figure out the permit approval and public participation process of land use applications in Redmond. She asked the City to make sure the flyer boxes on Notice of Application boards stay filled all the way through the permit review process. She also asked the City to post if there is a tree retention exception proposed on a project, both within the flyers and on the notice board. She did not care if a sign was cluttered with words. She wanted to know if an exception was being made at a cost to the environment, which could affect someone's health. Citizens should be able to pick up a flyer to see if they are even concerned about a project before having to dig into online resources, which can be a confusing process. She said the City is not required by the law to make public notices this clear. But, she said clarity is the City's duty, if public information and participation is a priority. Ms. BeCraft said she believed the City could do what it takes to provide citizens with accessible, understandable information about how projects are harming the natural environment.

Gary Smith spoke to the Commission next. He said he represented Water Tenders, a group of local people who care about wetlands and streams in the Bear Creek Watershed. He said his group does not, as a rule, file lawsuits or appeals to affect development projects. But, he does closely monitor development processes near riparian areas, and where appropriate, works to minimize negative affects on the environment. Water Tenders' motto is "down a tree, kill a salmon." Historically, his group has focused on north Redmond, but he has worked closely with the City on two projects closer to the urban area. One spot is the Millennium development at Union Hill Road. The developer and City met with Water Tenders early in the process, which presented an opportunity. By mutual agreement, the plan was changed to allow for wider buffers on the creek, put in a bigger restoration area, and allow for larger specimen plants and trees. Mr. Smith said this was a successful buffer restoration that was a source of pride for the development owner, as well.

Another success story was Redmond Assemblage, the new development near the fire station on 116<sup>th</sup>. As a result of collaborative efforts with City Staff, Water Tenders was able to get clear tree retention information in the SEPA notifications. This project was an example of confusion that can result when changes occur to an approved project over the period of development. Mr. Smith noted that success stories like this are not plentiful, most likely. In his experience, a developer comes in seeking the maximum impact allowed by the law. The City's job is to approve a request if it meets regulations, which always has some flexibility based on economic and environmental interests. Mr. Smith said it was the citizens' job to hold the City accountable and that the development boundaries are adhered to. However, citizens must be able to get to the table and have a voice. The public process, Mr. Smith believes, has always been somewhat murky and can limit public input. He said there has been very little room for significant citizen involvement in the permitting process. He asked the Commission to help the residents of Redmond get the tools to build a community to be proud of.

Ella Elman spoke next to the Commission. She lives in Bellevue near the border of Redmond. She is a forest ecologist representing Eastside Audubon, which has an active membership of more than 1,000 people. The group's mission is to protect, preserve, and enhance natural ecosystems and communities for the benefits of birds, other wildlife, and people. She noted that Eastside Audubon was a supporting party in Sustainable Redmond's lawsuit in response to the development at the Group Health site, which will remove more than 1,000 mature Douglas fir trees and significant bird habitat. Her group supports Sustainable Redmond's recently proposed amendments to the Zoning Code, and noted that significant and landmark trees are of particular interest to her. These trees, she continued, provide a wide variety of ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, stormwater runoff retention, soil erosion prevention, air and water filtering, noise and visual buffers, and wildlife habitat. She said many studies, including some done by Kathy Wolf at the University of Washington, have shown that trees make communities healthier, more prosperous, and safer. Communities with trees and vegetation have fewer crimes and vandalism than those without trees. Having contact with nature helps people heal faster from illness, Ms. Elman said, and is important for mental health.

Ecologically, large trees provide many more benefits than small trees, she continued. Large trees provide more opportunities for nesting for birds and other animals and provide excellent stormwater retention services. The National Tree Benefit Calculator shows that a three-inch diameter Douglas fir, such as one planted in mitigation for a development project, will intercept 104 gallons of stormwater runoff per year. A landmark tree, 30 inches in diameter or greater, will intercept 4,174 gallons of stormwater. It would take about 200 years for a tree to reach thirty inches in diameter. As a community, Ms. Elman said the community should do everything it can to preserve large trees for their value and beauty. She said these trees were vital to urban developments. Mature trees cannot be replaced by planting saplings in mitigation. It would be necessary to plant more than forty trees to offset the stormwater intercepted by one landmark tree.

Ms. Elman said Sustainable Redmond is proposing a safety net that would ensure at least 50% of landmark trees and 20% of significant trees are left on any site regardless of exceptions. Eastside Audubon supports this amendment and would like to see at least 50% of landmark trees and 35% of significant trees retained. She thanked the Commission members for their time. She submitted a signed letter of support from the members of Eastside Audubon.

Mary Wirta next spoke to the Commission. She is a 30-year resident of the City. She said she represented neighborhoods that are involved in areas such as Overlake, Idlywood, and Sherwood Forest. She lives near the Group Health development in the Overlake area. She said she will be adversely impacted by this development and the 100% clear cut of 4,000 trees. She said these trees are part of one of the last remaining urban forests in her area. She said at least 1,143 trees in this cut are landmark and significant trees. She claims, by Redmond Code, that these trees should be left on the site. She did not know about and was not sent a letter about this clear cut. She said, due to a lack of clarity in the

documents on this project, and because she did not receive any notice, the omission of the SEPA review was missed. She was hoping for the opportunity to voice strong objections to this project prior to further planning. She said there was not any proper neighborhood notice given on this development.

Ms. Wirta said she had supported Group Health in the past in its work to preserve the environment during its projects. She was dismayed to find, in this new development, that the entire value of the urban forest and natural wildlife preserve would be eliminated by a clear cut of trees. She said none of her neighbors were alerted of this situation. She was concerned about the 300 by 300 park, without trees, that would be built on this site to be built over an underground garage. She was concerned about the 1,400 apartment units and the many office buildings and hotel units to be built on this site, as well. She expressed her concern about additional car traffic near this site, as well, and its impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. She spoke out to the City Council about the immense value of the urban forest to the City on the Group Health project, but had only about 15 minutes to compose any thoughts on the matter, as she had found out about it very late in the process. She told the Council about the environmental protection value of the habitat ecosystem and the value of air cleansing provided by trees that would be lost to her neighborhood. She said parks and schools in the surrounding neighborhoods would be maxed out by this project. Chairman Gregory asked her to wrap up her comments.

Ms. Wirta said that, at the City Council meeting where she testified, no one else from the public spoke out. The public hearing was extended, and more than a hundred people jammed in for the next session. She said pre-notification on this project was abysmal to non-existent, and there is a need for more transparency, and accurate, descriptive notice mailed to people in Redmond and surrounding neighborhoods. She said most people do not have access or know-how in terms of using computers and do not get newspapers. She said people within a quarter-mile of a project should be notified via mail. She said replacing a 100-foot tree with a one-foot tree in another neighborhood does not replace the value of significant trees, much less a forest of landmark and significant trees.

Ms. McMagee next spoke to the Commission. She lives within 500 feet of the boundary of the Group Health development and was not notified about the changes proposed, including the clear cut of trees. She said no one in her apartment complex was told about the cutting of 1,133 landmark and significant trees on this project, as well. She found out about it reading the newspaper. She said the process was hidden from the people because most people would have objected to the clear cut of trees and lack of regard for tree retention laws. She said proper public notification would have prevented what she claims is a gross violation of Redmond's tree laws by Group Health and the City Council. She asked how a clear cut could have been approved which violates all environmental protection for streams, salmon and air quality for the sake of a developer. She said there was nothing to be gained by the loss of these trees that would be worth the City's reputation. She said the City was not transparent on this project, and there was a disregard for the citizens' rights to have trees.

She noted that Redmond had a lot of trees as well as development. She said the previous board of Group Health had valued the environment and its value to our health. That was disregarded, she said, for the sake of the Overlake development. She said putting a citizen opinion forward was very difficult on this project, as it was already completed in a study session seven months before Ms. McGee was able to testify. She said Metro buses provide transportation to the Overlake project area, and could be impacted for 18 years with the construction, which could seriously affect transportation. She said that impact, as well as the impact on trees and pedestrian walkways, was not considered. She asked the Planning Commission to reconsider the pedestrian walkways that would be affected by this development.

Chairman Gregory asked Ms. McGee to keep her focus on the proposal before the Commission, and noted that the Group Health project had been settled. Ms. McGee said she was a plaintiff in that suit and did not agree with the decision, which she said was unethical. She supported the Sustainable Redmond proposal, because it would allow future problems to be rectified in advance. She said that small saplings do not replace larger trees. She asked for clear, concise information on what trees would be left and what would be cut on projects in the future. She said the Sustainable Redmond proposal would help reach that goal. Such information was not made available on the Group Health project. Ms. Stiteler reiterated that public comments should be made specifically on the amendments in front of the Commission, and noted that the development agreement with Group Health is not part of the discussion this evening. Chairman Gregory said he would allow the comments of Ms. McGee, which he summarized as saying the Sustainable Redmond proposal would give her and other citizens a better understanding of what would happen to a property.

Ms. McGee said the proposal would help citizens understand what would affect transportation, trees that would be retained, and water retention, as well as what the mitigation responsibilities of the developer would be. She said she would have loved to have had a notice on the Group Health project and be part of the study session on it early in the project. She said many people near the site did not get notified, and she is concerned about transportation and tree issues that will be deeply affected by the Group Health project. She said the Sustainable Redmond proposal would add value to future development. She invited everyone to take another look at the Group Health project and go onto the property and take pictures of it, because the urban forest there would not be seen again. She said the proposal before the Commission would help protect a site like this. She invited people to call the Governor's office about this project as well and asked people to complain to the Governor about this project.

Ms. Jeanine Sielinski spoke next to the Commission. Chairman Gregory reminded her and other speakers to keep their focus on the proposal before the Commission. She wanted to speak out about the Group Health debacle, which horrified her. She did not know how an urban forest could be destroyed. She wanted to make sure this would not happen again, and she supported Sustainable Redmond's proposal.

Barbara Thompson was the next speaker. She has lived in Redmond for 24 years and moved here from Federal Way. She said there was amazing natural beauty in Redmond, which included trees. She spoke out at a City Council meeting on the Group Health project several months ago, and asked the Council to hold Group Health to the same standards that everyone else must follow. A Councilmember, she says, told her after this meeting that she was very naïve. She was told that the regulation regarding the saving a percentage of trees was meant for residential property owners, not business owners. She said she was told that Microsoft and other businesses had also received tree exemptions. She said that asking for fairness was not naïve. She gave her full support to the amendment proposed by Sustainable Redmond and hoped for better outcomes in the future as opposed to the recent past.

Chairman Gregory closed the oral portion of the public hearing. The Commission will meet on this subject again at its next meeting. The Commission took a five-minute break at this point, with a plan after that break to discuss general concerns and defer the detailed discussion of the issues matrix until that next meeting.

After the break, Chairman Gregory noted that the written comment period would be kept open for at least another week. He asked the Commissioners for their comments on what was discussed at the oral public hearing. He asked the Commission to organize their comments with regard to defining the Technical Committee, the tree ratio, and the question of public notification and participation.

Commissioner Murray said, with regard to the Technical Committee, three points were brought up. Membership is one issue, and the link to the RMC proposed by staff to answer this concern was acceptable to him. Regarding decision processes, Commissioner Murray said he saw the Technical Committee staff report as staff evaluating, based on their jobs, their opinions of how things should happen. He said the staff has to have time to put together arguments and evaluate pros and cons of certain issues. The Committee also gives the governing board a place to start.

He said it was difficult to describe every single issue and how it would be processed, in that there are different factors involved in different cases. Thus, allowing the staff the freedom to explore issues and write a report is something that is difficult to articulate in Code language. The membership could be noted in the Code, but noting a staff process would be much more difficult, in his opinion. Lastly, on reporting out, Commissioner Murray said that he believed it was possible to clearly document what ultimately happens with information and where it goes. To summarize, Commissioner Murray agreed with two of the three Sustainable Redmond recommendations. He said it would be difficult to report out on the process of a staff evaluation.

Commissioner Chandorkar said, as a member of the public, that the Technical Committee appears to be a nebulous enigma. Something happens inside that Committee before projects are brought to the Planning Commission that is not known to the public, and there is no public input during the Technical Committee process. Commissioner Chandorkar would like some clarification and changes surrounding how the Technical

Committee operates. He asked if it was too late already for public input to happen during the Planning Commission and City Council process.

Commissioner Murray said, without offense to staff, there would be a bias in technical reports, which often lean towards influencing an outcome. He said the Commission's job is to see through that bias and often, Commissioners do a good job picking apart the technical report to make sure policy is not determined in those reports. The applicant suggests that policy is determined in the Technical Committee, but Commissioner Murray challenged that notion and said that was not true. He said the Commission's job is to question aspects of the technical report using the different areas of expertise held by the Commissioners. He said he did not see the Technical Committee's role as nebulous, but rather as a generator of staff opinion that the Commission was meant to question. Commissioner Chandorkar said he was not talking about the Technical Committee trying to create policy. He said what happens inside the Technical Committee is not always transparent to the public, which was reflected in some of the comments of the public. He is asking if there should be a way of getting more technical input at the time of the Technical Committee meeting rather than at the point the Commission receives a brushed-up report.

Commissioner Biethan said he did not have a problem allowing the Technical Committee to make its own decisions and report them. Allowing for more awareness of the Technical Committee by the public makes sense to him, but he said there was a difference between making sure the public has the opportunity to provide input to the Technical Committee versus having the Technical Committee act transparently in every single thing they do. He suggested the Committee could take information in, do its work, and put out the information. Commissioner Chandorkar agreed with that, and did not want to suggest having public participation at every level and every meeting held by the Technical Committee.

Commissioner Sanders said the issue was figuring out whether the Technical Committee should be defined in the glossary. She noted that the definition is there and she did not think it was worth issuing a revision for the one item proposed. She liked staff's recommendation of providing an electronic link to the Technical Committee, with an option that the definition could be revisited in an annual or biannual update. Commissioner Sanders noted that the Commission, in going through the glossary recently, found many definitions that raised concerns. She noted that the idea was to have any definition mimic the Zoning Code or wherever its point of origin might be. The definition of the Technical Committee, in the future, could be italicized or cited as a reference with a link.

Commissioner Chandorkar clarified that he did not want to change the discussion on the Technical Committee, but he was referring to the notification process on the Committee. Commissioner Murray said that the applicant wanted to make sure that three parts were included in the definition of the Technical Committee, wherever it was referenced. He reiterated that two of those parts were taken care of in the definition. The request for

clearer information within the definition on the decision-making process would be very difficult to articulate. Chairman Gregory agreed with that assessment.

Commissioner Miller agreed with Commissioner Murray that the process associated with the Technical Committee is hard to define. It is not just advisory. That said, the characteristics of the process should be easily defined and should be transparent. He agreed with Commissioner Chandorkar that sometimes, the perception is that the Committee does not have adequate sunlight on it. Commissioner Miller said discussing that point is beyond the scope of the proposal before the Commission. He hoped to have a discussion about this point in the future.

Commissioner Miller was struck by the public testimony at the meeting this evening, and noted that clearly, to him, something failed in a big, systemic way on the Group Health project in that so many people felt disenfranchised. He would like to see a post-mortem on that process, and wanted to see a broader discussion of public input, as it extends beyond the topic of tree retention or other parts of this proposal.

Chairman Gregory added more commentary on the Technical Committee, and noted that there is some frustration about openness or transparency. While the discussion is only about the definition of the Technical Committee, he hoped to discuss what Mr. Hinman proposed, which was to have Technical Committee meetings open to the public. Chairman Gregory said that would be a large step, and perhaps inappropriate, in that it is a staff committee. He would like to allow staff to work freely. He echoed Commissioner Murray's comment that the Planning Commission and others in the City are able to pick the Technical Committee reports apart. Those reports are not law, Chairman Gregory continued. He said it was a Commissioner's job to question the Committee's recommendations, hear public testimony, and do one's own research. Chairman Gregory said he was not ready to allow the public into Technical Committee meetings.

Regarding the public process overall, Chairman Gregory also heard compelling public testimony. He did not like having to remind people to stay on topic and not repeat what others have said. However, he said there was a need to get debriefed on what happened with the Group Health project, as Commissioner Miller suggested.

Commissioner Chandorkar clarified that he did not think every meeting of the Technical Committee should be open to the public. However, notification of such meetings, especially on topics like massive tree removals, should be in order and should be considered by the City. He did not agree with staff's statement that there would be too much clutter on notice boards if more words were added. He said the signs were cluttered already. Commissioner Chandorkar hoped for a compromise. He said, when sensitive issues are involved, there would be no harm in adding clutter. People would read a sign from a close distance anyway. He suggested creating some icons, such as a red tree to designate tree exceptions, to give cues to the public. He did not think clutter was an issue.

Commissioner Biethan said he did not like the specific issues brought up in the applicant's proposal with regard to notification, but he said notification is not being done

well. He noted that he was not sure the technical report coming from staff adequately addresses that concern over public input. He asked that more thought should be given to this issue in light of the many compelling comments on public input.

Commissioner Murray complimented the applicant for not only offering criticism, but also offering concrete solutions to help start a discussion on public input. He said a review should be done on how information is presented to the public. He agreed with Commissioner Chandorkar that icons would be a good idea to express certain points on notification boards. He said the whole board could be redesigned. It does not appear systematic to him and is difficult to understand. He said a graphic designer would say this is not an effective way to communicate.

Commissioner Murray spoke to the next suggestion about neighborhood meetings raised in the proposal. He liked the idea that a specific neighborhood meeting would not have to happen regarding an exception, but there should be a clear message about what the neighborhood meetings that do exist are going to cover. Commissioner Murray has met with staff on this issue and asked about ways to effectively market the Commission's meetings or information gathering. He suggested that the City could be a better marketer of its information. He did not think an additional meeting was necessary.

Commissioner Murray noted that the City's web site is complex and daunting with regard to the planning process. As much as he would like a review of marketing techniques and notice board displays, he asked for a focus group on the navigability of the City website and the clarity and ease of accessing information pertinent to applicants.

Commissioner Sanders agreed with Commissioner Biethan about some give and take on the specifics involved in the Sustainable Redmond proposal. She said public notices should address any sort of exceptions or variances that might be involved, not just tree exceptions. She liked the idea of icons and would like to study that further. She said there was room for improvement with regard to public notice by the City.

Commissioner Miller agreed on the previous discussion about the signs, and said the signs need to evolve. He said icons would be a good idea, even in the online setting. He said the City could shorten the learning curve on accessing project application information on the web through icons and other improvements. Regarding public meetings, Commissioner Miller said he was not an advocate of more meetings, but smarter meetings. He would like to establish thresholds for the content of meetings to focus attention and energy on issues that matter. If involving more public input early in the process on major projects is accomplished, then the Commission has done its job, in his opinion. He would like to see more public access to project reviews, and not just on the issue of tree retention. He said whenever exceptions are involved, that should mean the public is involved earlier.

Commissioner Murray said he was not familiar with the history of tree ratios and replacement and how they were established versus the alternatives suggested. To develop the issues matrix, he would like to understand the rationale behind the current City

policies on tree ratios before evaluating the proposal made by the applicant. Commissioner Biethan said he had no comments on the tree ratio issue.

Commissioner Chandorkar said he was disturbed about the number of trees on the Group Health site that would be destroyed. He said, frankly, that he was appalled. He said there would have to be some thought given to exceptions in cases like this when this magnitude of clear cutting is considered. He was not sure if that needed to be codified or if another process would need to be involved. He said this issue goes to the core of City of Redmond values. Commissioner Chandorkar said the City must have been aware of the extent to which the clear cutting would happen on the Group Health site and the emotional distress it would cause. Thus, some extraordinary steps should have been taken. Notification, with developments of this size and with this much destruction of trees, should be beyond the usual 500-foot rule. Commissioner Chandorkar said common sense, not Code, should guide cases like these, along with a slightly more emotional approach. He was struck by the testimony heard at this meeting and asked if this could be a discussion point in the future.

Mr. McConaghy clarified that Commissioner Chandorkar was asking if there should be circumstances for which more than a 500-foot notice should be considered. The applicant did not bring up that issue. Commissioner Chandorkar agreed with that assessment, but did not know if it was easy to quantify the magnitude of development or tree cutting. He said there would have to be some mechanism by which notification would actually be given to a wider number of people to avoid another situation like Group Health in the future. Mr. McConaghy said that there were measures that happened with Group Health that were more than what was required. The question of the exception was elevated to the City Council and the public hearing was held from October to December. Commissioner Chandorkar said, in some ways, this idea of going above and beyond with public notice should be in the Code. Chairman Gregory said some history on this issue would be valuable in the matrix discussion.

Commissioner Sanders echoed Commissioner Murray's request for background on tree ratio decisions and numbers. She noted that accepting the applicant's request would be a new minimum for tree retention, which staff has said would be at odds with the purpose of allowing tree exceptions to be informed by the circumstances of a site. Allowing for 50% retention of landmark trees on one site might be reasonable, but could preclude reasonable use on another site. The term *reasonable use*, in her mind, is very subjective. However, these are the types of cases that need to be brought to light and have a lot of public comment. She said there should be a clear understanding of the tree ratio minimums and a stringent application for exceptions.

Commissioner Miller said he was struck by the related nature of the two items on the agenda this evening: the SEPA review and public access to those reviews as well as the process and notification on tree retention cases in particular. With specific numbers on tree ratios, he had a hard time justifying any case where an exemption would take the amount of trees to zero. That said, he wanted to keep in mind that there are other environmentally generated land use policies in the City, and density can be an

environmentally superior approach in some areas of Redmond, particularly in light of the City's investment in transit. Commissioner Miller said the Commission was caught between an emotional topic, in trees, and the bigger picture of what makes a sustainable community. He hoped to shed more light on the process surrounding projects through the Commission's discussion. He wanted to make sure people could respond in a timely manner and that any technical thresholds employed would make sense to the public. He noted that even best practices can be subjective and noted he was not an expert on retention ratio numbers. Staff will bring the information that will help the Commission make a determination. He looked forward to improving the process overall.

Chairman Gregory said the applicant, in the presentation, made it clear that the group was not stuck on a particular number when it comes to tree ratios. Rather, the applicant is looking for a floor with tree retention, and zero is not a floor. Having said that, Chairman Gregory said he was at a loss as to say what a reasonable ratio would be for certain projects. He said this was an emotional subject, and asked if it were possible to have a floor that does not go to zero with regard to tree retention. He would like to discuss the rationale around that floor and why zero would or would not be acceptable.

Commissioner Murray said that the Commission has to strike balance. There are urban areas that emphasize density and transit, which is more sustainable than sprawl. He said finding a balance would be important, and might be project-specific. He noted that, when it comes to trees, the UW-Bothell campus tried to protect more than a hundred landmark trees, and built around them during construction. Also, 400,000 new trees were planted in the wetlands redevelopment area. Those trees are flourishing, but all the landmark trees died because the construction built around them. Those trees had to be taken down. Even the best intention to protect trees has to be balanced with the idea that growth might affect them anyway.

Chairman Gregory said the Commission members should review all their materials before their meeting next week. The Commission will focus on the issues matrix and try to make some progress on the proposed amendments made by the applicant. Mr. McConaghy said he was confident that he had recorded the issues that the Commission had brought up during the meeting. He said staff would be ready to present on the topics of reasonable use, the criteria for tree exceptions and best practices at the next meeting. He will attempt to incorporate more written public comments, if any are received. Chairman Gregory closed this section of the meeting.

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

Ms. Stiteler reported that at the Council meeting the night before this meeting, there were several Planning staff reports given. The first one was concerning the requested General Sewer Plan Amendment for Rose Hill Heights, which is now moving forward to study session for the Council on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. There was also an update on the Central Puget Sound Growing Transit Communities program and the East Corridor Task Force. That topic will be covered by the Commission on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. The third report was on the 160<sup>th</sup> site in Downtown and a discussion of development objectives and criteria for use in

a Request for Proposals (RFP) for senior affordable housing. Lastly, the Council appointed Citizen Advisory Committee members for the Southeast Redmond Neighborhood Plan Update. Ms. Stiteler noted that some changes have been made to the Planning Commission's website. Planning Commission rules are now on the front page of the site. She asked the Commission to give her more feedback on the website as necessary.

**ADJOURN**

MOTION by Commissioner Biethan and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Chairman Gregory adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:40 p.m.

Minutes Approved On:

Planning Commission Chair

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