



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Final

Planning Commission

Chris Spivey, Chair
Darrell Windsor, Vice Chair
Debra Pohlman
Randy Hughey
Richard Parmelee

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Spivey called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Present: Spivey, Windsor, Pohlman, Hughey, Parmelee, Knox (Assembly Liaison)

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A Approval of the January 17, 2017 meeting minutes.

Parmelee/Windsor moved to **APPROVE** the January 17, 2017 meeting minutes.

Motion **PASSED 5-0.**

IV. REPORTS

B Planning Regulations and Procedures.

V. THE EVENING BUSINESS

C Discussion and direction of the land use, housing, and economic sections of the Comprehensive Plan.

Bosak provided an introduction to the Comprehensive Plan process.

Sheinberg stated that the hope is that, at this meeting, the Commission will approve the draft goals, actions, and objectives for the housing, economic, and land use chapters, with the understanding that small changes may continue to be made. Sheinberg stated that the second half of the meeting will address future growth options. Sheinberg gave an overview of upcoming meetings and topics.

Bosak stated that all of the pre-made meetings in boxes have been taken, but more can always be made. Spivey asked about the results of the meetings, and Bosak stated that results will be reported after the February 28 deadline.

HOUSING

Pierson introduced the housing chapter. Windsor stated that the idea of tiny homes on wheels as discussed in 1.1.g has historically been nixed by the Planning Commission. Bosak stated that the Plan is for the next 15 years. Pohlman asked for language to be included to state that tiny homes on wheels would be properly secured to the ground and other safety concerns would be adequately addressed. Hughey clarified that these concerns are primarily under the purview of the Building Official/Fire Marshal. Bosak stated that building codes are always evolving, like our zoning code. Bosak stated that we can work toward this action. Pohlman suggested changing language to state that tiny homes on wheels would be developed to meet codes. Spivey stated that we should encourage tiny homes on foundations. Hughey stated that we should have both options. Bosak asked the commission to determine if they wish to move toward tiny homes by 2030 or not. Hughey stated that he is in support of tiny homes on wheels. Parmelee stated that Anchorage requires anchor cables on mobile homes, and perhaps those could be used on tiny homes on wheels. Scarcelli stated that he spoke with the Building Official, and if this action item were to move forward, safety concerns would be addressed. Scarcelli asked if the commission had any prime locations in mind. Pohlman stated that mobile home areas are one area, but not the only location. Bosak asked for consensus. Spivey and Windsor stated that they're against tiny homes on wheels. Pohlman stated concern with language that mobile home parks are in prime locations, and stated that people should be able to live on the waterfront even if they're not millionaires.

In regard to 1.1.h, Windsor asked if those housing types would be available in R-1. Bosak stated that the commission isn't locking themselves into specific zones, but just approving the concept..

Pohlman asked for clarification on 1.1.f. Bosak stated that there are 2 float home options at ANB Harbor, and there are strict standards concerning roof pitch and other design guidelines. Bosak stated that some of the aesthetic standards could be relaxed to encourage development.

In regard to 1.1.i, Parmelee asked about density bonuses. Bosak stated that a density bonus would allow more units at a higher density in exchange for such features as an open space area.

Parmelee stated that it would behoove the commission to look into financing options for various affordable housing types. Bosak stated that there are items under Objective 3 to make housing information available to the public. Spivey stated that as long as it's on a foundation and meets building codes, a home can be financed through regular financing through a bank.

Clyde Bright stated that city code requires that permanent homes have wheels removed and are tied down. Bright stated that the city has an RV park, and wheels aren't removed and vehicles not tied down. Bright stated that shipping container walls exceed requirements for residential structure walls, and people are currently living in shipping containers now. Bright stated that we need to remain open to what the future will hold.

Matthew Jackson stated that he believes a lot of problems pointed out under

Objective 1 are a result of overregulation. Jackson stated that increasing codes will continue to throw up roadblocks. Jackson recommended an exemption for owner-occupied structures under 2500 square feet.

Steven Eisenbeisz drew attention to Objective 3, and questioned if any of those items are the city's job. Eisenbeisz stated that other entities are already meeting these needs. Eisenbeisz stated that following through with the items under Objective 3 would increase the cost of city government.

Pat Alexander stated agreement with Eisenbeisz. Alexander stated that the wording indicates the items that the commission likes and those that it doesn't like, such as "encourage" versus "allow." Alexander acknowledges that work on this plan is hard work.

Ben Timby stated that he is a local business owner and is in need of affordable housing. Timby is very interested in tiny homes, and stated that a lot of people interested in tiny homes would prefer bank loans or family loans instead of a mortgage. Timby stated that it is cheaper to transport a structure on wheels to Sitka. Timby stated that deregulation would be the quickest way to solve the affordable housing issue.

Clyde Bright asked if there are any yurts in Sitka. Bosak stated yes, and it's legal because it's on a foundation. Bright stated that Abraham Lincoln lived in a log cabin with a dirt floor. Bright stated that we don't want to overthink things.

Anne Pollnow encouraged the commission to remember that this is a long-term plan. Pollnow stated that lending guidelines may change. Pollnow spoke in favor of disseminating housing information.

Hughey stated that action items under 1.1 are in favor of reducing regulations, and we just want things to be done safely.

Spivey stated that the commission is not in charge of building code.

Windsor/Hughey moved to submit the housing goals, objectives and action steps to the draft stage.

Motion PASSED 5-0.

ECONOMICS

Bosak gave an overview of the economic goals, actions, and objectives.

Pohlman had a question about 1.5 and its language of meeting the lowest level of the area's parking requirements. Bosak stated that this is specific to downtown, and the best use of space downtown is shops, placemaking, and walkable spaces. Spivey stated that he is struggling with this item and general parking issues downtown. Bosak stated that the transportation chapter will address parking use and parking counts. Scarcelli stated that planning research has shown that parking doesn't encourage affordable housing or economic development. Spivey stated that he thinks the item is redundant because downtown is already developed at its current level of parking. Bosak stated that input that she has received is generally in favor of reducing parking

requirements.

Parmelee stated that 1.1 should be amended to not only maintain walkable routes for visitors but also locals. Parmelee suggested looking at off-site parking options.

Bosak worked with commissioners to reword 1.5. Pohlman stated that 1.1 and 1.5 could be merged. Windsor asked that edits not be made until the commission hears from the public.

In regard to 4.1, Parmelee would like to see additional space availability for food carts. Scarcelli stated that East Lansing, MI designated a park space for food carts and a farmer's market. A community in California shut-down a main street on Thursday nights for food carts. Sheinberg stated that the municipality can offer vendor permits. Spivey stated that previous commenters have expressed concern for impacts to permanent restaurants that pay property tax. Windsor stated that Sheldon Jackson Campus would be a good place for food carts.

Spivey stated that he would like to see an emphasis on developing a third strong industry to supplement our current industries. Bosak stated that some action items address attracting businesses.

Knox asked for elaboration on "maintain healthy harbors" under Objective 6. Bosak stated that the Port and Harbors Commission would be doing a meeting in a box, and hopefully they can suggest specific action items.

Pohlman stated that we should address value-added and value-subtracted when making decisions.

Anne Pollnow asked clarification on iconic features. Bosak stated that these could include statues or the "Welcome to Sitka" sign. Pollnow suggested that these could also be historic properties. Pollnow stated that historic properties and cultural resources are missing from these objectives. Pollnow stated that historic preservation has economic benefits: rehabilitation jobs, manufacturing, retail, tax revenue, investment leveraging, public funds, tax credits, 20% federal tax credit, property values increase, heritage tourism, attracting investment. Hughey and Bosak asked for Pollnow's recommendation for improving the current wording of the item under Arts, Culture, and History. Pollnow stated that we should acknowledge historic preservation as an economic driver. Bosak asked Pollnow if they can work together on language. Pohlman stated that historic preservation could be listed under Objective 1. Scarcelli stated that 60% of money spent on historic preservation stays in the community.

Garry White represented SEDA. White stated that the community's money is inevitably going to leak out, and we should include a statement to attract outside money. White stated that the infrastructure section should be expanded. White stated appreciation for inclusion of assisted living. White stated that we should not place excessive requirements on businesses.

Charles Bingham stated that three historic district projects were not adopted, but could contribute to downtown vibrancy. Bingham stated that overparking is an issue nationwide. Bingham suggested pop up shops around Crescent

Harbor. Bingham stated that he would like to see hospitals included as basic infrastructure.

Attendee stated disappointment that a parking garage was not included on the ground level of the new hotel. She stated that difficulty parking would discourage her from coming downtown.

Pat Alexander stated that a seawalk is planned to extend down Katlian Avenue. Alexander stated that many historic events have happened on Katlian Avenue, and signage should be included on the seawalk. Alexander stated that tourists want more public restrooms and benches. Alexander stated that vacation packages could be bundled and presold to tourists. Alexander stated that STA eventually wants to have all of their staff in one building, so they will eventually need to expand. Alexander stated that transportation is vital to economic growth and tourism, so the city should get into the transportation business.

Steven Eisenbeisz stated that customer and employee parking need to be differentiated. Eisenbeisz agrees with the emphasis on historic preservation. In regard to 1.3, Eisenbeisz stated that we shouldn't place the burden on business owners. Eisenbeisz stated that overregulation is not friendly to businesses.

Scott Saline spoke to 2.4 and reference to LEED. Saline stated that Sitka wouldn't have needed a dam if they had pumped heat from the ocean. Language should state electric resistive. Saline stated that he had to buy 4 parking spaces for his business, but another restaurant increased their seating capacity and they can just use the ANB parking lot.

Clyde Bright stated that the charter fishing industry should be emphasized. Bright stated that 45% of tourist dollars come from charter fishing. Bright stated that there is limited hotel space in town, and hotel rooms are expensive.

Ben Timby stated that he's not sure what the concern is with tourist traffic, as there are only a limited number of car rentals in town. Timby stated that no buses currently run to the airport, and perhaps this could alleviate the number of car rentals. Timby suggested an electric trolley running along the primary streets. Hughey stated that bus routes to the airport would help parking downtown. Windsor stated that a lot of people park at Seward Square to walk to the Westmark. Timby stated that he would like to see competitive moorage, and stated that some people find it more viable to go to Wrangell in the off-season.

Windsor stated that Bright raised an important point about charter fishing. Bosak pointed to an action step under Objective 6.

Pohlman/Hughey moved to submit the economic goals, objectives and action steps to the draft stage.

Motion PASSED 5-0.

LAND USE

Scarcelli explained the public process thus far that has resulted in this draft.

Scarcelli introduced the land use goals, objectives, and actions. The triple bottom line is vital for planning.

Spivey stated that he does not feel comfortable moving this forward until hazard mapping is available. Bosak stated that mapping will not be available for another year, but the commission will soon see a critical areas ordinance. Scarcelli stated that this chapter does not give specific guidance on location, and this is a draft. Spivey stated that he would like to have all the information before making a decision. Bosak stated that the critical areas ordinance will determine where development will be allowed and what additional steps will be required of developers. Bosak stated that they are co-aligned, but the land use plan does not fully rely on the hazard mapping. Knox stated that he would be concerned if the Assembly received a Comprehensive Plan without a land use chapter. Bosak reminded commissioners that landslide risk is not the community's only risk. Spivey would like to see the new flood maps co-aligned. Scarcelli pointed to 8.14. Pohlman requested that this item be moved toward the top of the list.

Windsor asked about 2.1.e. Scarcelli stated that although several neighborhoods contribute to the downtown area, these separate areas have their own unique character. Scarcelli stated that many communities have Comprehensive Plans and also Master Plans for individual areas. Sheinberg stated that the future growth chapter will describe intended future growth for specific areas such as No Name Mountain. Sheinberg stated that these actions plant the seeds for future planning.

Charles Bingham stated that he appreciates the inclusion of agricultural zones, and perhaps agriculture should be included in the economics chapter. Bingham encouraged the inclusion of complete streets policy in 8.10. Bingham raised concern for plowing and de-icing bike lanes and sidewalks.

Pat Alexander stated that heavy rain causes toilets to back up in ANB Hall because of drainage issues on Back Street. Alexander stated that runoff will impact residential and commercial development. Alexander said that a FEMA representative told her that the runoff is a city issue. Alexander stated that culture is tucked into a cultural section, but culture runs throughout everything. Alexander stated that there is valuable information in previous plans.

Chandler O'Connell thanked the commission, staff, and the consultant for their work on the plan. In regard to 1.c, O'Connell would place the North Indian River area as a low priority for city acquisition because other locations could more easily meet the goals of affordable housing, and because the public should have a conversation before North Indian River is developed. O'Connell suggested strengthening "recognizes the natural environment" in the goal statement.

Eisenbeisz asked if 4.5 would prevent him from developing his property. In regard to 7.1, Eisenbeisz stated that LIDs are not necessarily compatible with affordable housing.

Matthew Jackson thanked the commission and staff, and is concerned that some items under Objectives 7 and 8 are not under the purview of the Planning Commission, and others may not be specific enough to be actionable. Jackson

stated that we should build in results and public engagement. Hughey asked for clarification. Jackson stated that when members of the public discuss tiny homes on wheels, they are told that the decision depends on building code and is beyond the Planning Commission.

Clyde Bright stated that the Central Business District should be expanded to Lakeside and Sheldon Jackson. Bright stated that parking is hard to find in the summer. Sheinberg stated that the future growth activity that was planned was intended to determine future areas for commercial expansion, and this activity will be rescheduled.

Hughey stated that the biggest chunk of undeveloped land is Baranof Elementary, and perhaps additional downtown land could be opened up by building a new school elsewhere.

Windsor/Parmelee moved to submit the land use goals, objectives and action steps to the draft stage.

Motion PASSED 5-0.

VI. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Bosak reported on the recent floodplain meeting and stated that there have been changes specifically in the Lake Street area. Short-term rentals on boats will be considered by Port and Harbors Commission tomorrow. Bosak asked for a representative for a float home ad hoc meeting Friday at noon, as code requires a Planning Commission member to participate. Parmelee volunteered. Bosak is facilitating Meetings in a Box at Port and Harbors and Pierson is facilitating Meetings in a Box at Historic Preservation Commission.

VII. PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Pollnow stated that this plan progress is encouraging.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Spivey ADJOURNED the meeting at 9:56 PM.

ATTEST: _____
Samantha Pierson, Planner I