

MINUTES

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU  
Dennis Watson, Vice-Chairman**

February 19, 2013

**1. ROLL CALL**

Vice-Chairman, Dennis Watson, called the Committee of the Whole meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Planning Commission (PC), held in the Assembly Chambers of the Municipal Building, to order at 5:15 p.m.

Commissioners present: Jerry Medina, Dan Miller, Dennis Watson, Nathan Bishop, Nicole Grewe, Benjamin Haight, Karen Lawfer.

Commissioners absent: Marsha Bennett, Michael Satre.

A quorum was present.

Staff Present: Hal Hart, Director; Ben Lyman, Planner; Greg Chaney, Planning Manager (arrived at 5:26).

Vice-Chair Watson opened the meeting saying that they were going to convene the meeting as a working group and the purpose of the meeting was to review what staff had been working on for the last six weeks.

Vice-Chair Watson outlined the format of the meeting, reminding the public that there would be no public testimony that evening. Public comment would be taken up at the next Planning Commission meeting on February 26, 2013. Vice-Chair Watson reminded the Commission that they had a very full schedule and he did not anticipate getting through the Comprehensive Plan next week, so they would be taking public comments next week and right up to when the Plan went to the Assembly. He also asked if they could do their homework well ahead of time, it would be more efficient.

Mr. Miller stated that he would not be able to attend the next meeting and wondered how close they were to a quorum; he added that he would be available to call in, if need be. Vice-Chair

Watson stated that Mr. Satre would not be able to attend as well. Mr. Haight said that he wasn't sure if he would be able to attend as he would be in Ketchikan.

Mr. Lyman noted that there was no staff report but the packet on their desks today contains all of the comments that were received by their department prior to 4:30 p.m. last Thursday. Mr. Lyman reviewed the procedure he had used for going through and organizing the public comments by theme or chapter. He stated he had responded to or acknowledged all of the comments in some way. He stated that when they have a final Comprehensive Plan for adoption, they will include an appendix with all of the comments that had been received.

October 30, 2012, was the last time the Planning Commission had met to discuss the Comprehensive Plan update. During that time, staff went through all of the notes and made sure that all of the appropriate changes had been made. He said that notes had been added to the margins as to why a change was not made also. Eventually, they would have to publish the document and they would have two more years until they started updating it again.

Moving forward, he announced that they would be having a series of meetings; Committee of the Whole Meetings and Regular Planning Commissions meetings, where they would be going through the document again. He noted that they would keep handing out packets of comments as well as continue to accept public testimony and comments over the next few meetings.

A Committee of the Whole meeting has been scheduled for 5:15 p.m. with presentations by DOT centered on proposed improvements for pedestrian and bicycle safety along Egan Drive between Main Street and the bridge in Egan and CBJ Engineering focusing on the Seawalk and its status.

In reference to the February 26th meeting, he suggested to only have public testimony on the Comprehensive Plan and not really get into deliberation or discussion until other things were off the agenda. He reiterated that all written public testimony would be compiled into an appendix, so people could see it and that public testimony would continue to be accepted all the way through The Assembly's adoption process.

He explained the different kinds of comments received:

General Organizational Comments - Length, confusion, organization, and how much extraneous information was in this document.

Grammatical - Comments about words missing and references to feelings and opinions.

Comments listed by Chapter:

Chapter 1 (Page 3) - A comment about Alaska native history on choosing terminology that was least offensive to different segments of the population.

There was a final comment on Chapter 1 regarding sidebars; the purpose of the sidebar was for locating things that were not supposed to be taken as policy but rather background information. He stated that the commission could change that if needed.

Chapter 2 Sustainability – No comments.

Chapter 3 – No comments.

Chapter 4 - The information that had been updated had been drafted by the Affordable Housing Commission and staff had not gone back through other chapters to make sure that it agreed with what was in Chapter 4.

Housing Element, Chapter 4 - There were some questions about the information that was forwarded by the Affordable Housing Commission and statutorily accepted by the Planning Commission, but Mr. Lyman could not speak for the data forwarded.

Community Forum – Comments regarding how city property was disposed of, different dimensional standards and development restrictions, most of which were in Title 49 - the Land Use Code, what gets reviewed, permit applications and not necessarily something that would be in the Comprehensive Plan, although the ordinance that sets them would be guided by the Comprehensive Plan. He suggested that they may want to look at some of the descriptions of the Land Use Categories and it might be appropriate to have an implementing action stating that they would revise or update their dimensional standards or regulatory requirements accordingly.

Comments regarding different types of development needed to meet the various needs of the community (mixture of rural, suburban and urban forms, multi-family and single family housing).

City-owned properties and buildable sites – Comments suggested that the City has been tightening rules and discouraging home ownership. Mr. Lyman did not feel it was completely true; there were some areas that should be rural and some areas that would have a more urbanized form.

Comments about Standard Operating Procedures in the Housing Chapter, especially from the Outreach Coordinator at the Glory Hole who works closely with the homeless population, pointing to the lack of urgency and immediacy necessary to move the community from talking about solving the housing crisis to actually solving it. There was some comment about strengthening the language in those Standard Operating Procedures.

Comments regarding abandoned and derelict buildings, housing safety and maintenance.

Page 34 – The figure was very confusing, presents a broad categorization of groups being locked in one wage range. The graphic was presented by the Affordable Housing Commission and Planning Commission had requested to keep it. Staff looked at it and agreed that it didn't really show anything terribly useful and appeared to show that homeless singles and couples, and single parents and children were all in extremely low income levels whereas seniors, and disabled and half of the working poor were in very low income levels. The other two-thirds of the working poor are were in low income levels. The young skilled and young professional

workers make a moderate income and essentially service workers made the best income. He suggested that maybe they could either change or eliminate it, but it was something that Affordable Housing Commission forwarded to the Commission, and the Commission had wanted to keep it during their first review of Chapter 4.

Chapter 5, Economic Development - He mentioned questions concerning how the Comprehensive Plan is used, and if it would support opening the AJ Mine. He stated it was difficult to say as the City would have to make a move to open it, the Planning Commission would have to review it and make a determination if that move was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

There are comments on the Energy Chapter relating to ground source geothermal heating and Mr. Lyman anticipated getting some more comments from Southeast Hydropower as they had indicated that they would be giving them some more comments.

There were also comments regarding prioritizing geothermal over biofuel and biomass because the latter two were not carbon neutral.

There were some questions about stream setbacks, but there wasn't really a change.

Comments about responsible timber harvesting in Tongass - unfortunately the City does not have much say over how the Tongass is managed.

Chapter 7, Alaska Statute 7.10 SOP3 – Mr. Lyman had re-reviewed a comment that he had made previously and agreed with the commentator's analysis. Mr. Lyman wanted to retract his personal recommendation.

Transportation - There was a suggestion for fixed-guide way transit light rail between Downtown and the Valley. Another comment mentioned the Plan pushing the bike as transportation. Mr. Lyman clarified that that is not the intention of the staff or the Commission. The plan called for having a multimodal or an integrated multimodal transportation system where people could use different modes of transportation and not just private automobiles. He mentioned quoting a few policies to further clarify the point.

Parks, recreation trails and natural area resources – Comments regarding particular improvements. Mr. Lyman noted they are covered in the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan but some of those improvements are listed in Subareas 1 and 2 of Chapter 11, the Land Use Map section.

Chapter 10, Land Use Maps - Comments have been received asking why maps weren't showing updated changes. Mr. Lyman noted that no changes were made because the Commission did not want any changes made to the boundaries, though there were changes to some of the labels.

Mr. Lyman stated that they had received input (at public open houses) from densely populated areas like Mendenhall Valley, Auke Bay, Lemon Creek, downtown Juneau, and Douglas. They

had large format maps so the public could look at them more easily and asked them to mark where they lived, worked, or spent time or points of interest on the map, to help them see where they had more successful outreach to people and neighborhoods. One map that got quite a bit of interest was the bonus eligible area map which was relatively new, and the new growth area on West Douglas at Point Hilda was reduced in size because some of that land was purchased by **CHS Trust** with mitigation money from the Juneau International Airport Runway Safety Area Expansion. Most of the lots were in conservation status and not available for development.

Comment regarding Auke Rec being marked as a Federal Park on the map with no description of what that meant and State Parks were likewise shown on the key in the legend but did not actually exist in the Comprehensive Plan as a designation. Mr. Lyman recommended descriptions of those properties that could be put into the next draft; Federal Park - Public lands owned by federal agencies and managed for recreation use; State Park - Public lands owned by state agencies and managed for recreational use.

Mr. Lyman reviewed some of the former land designation history and brought up a case in which a gentleman's piece of property was taken out of a commercial area and put into a residential area, it was a historical shop, and looked like a good candidate for a zone change application.

Comments regarding Downtown and the Willoughby District did not have any changes with the plan, just more of the existing conditions in the adopted plan, which the Commission is already aware of.

New Housing Areas - The Comprehensive Plan did not address the suitability of using uphill land and the first half mile of the North Douglas Highway for higher density housing. Mr. Lyman reported that the area was designated as Medium Density Residential, intended to be developed to densities of 5-20 dwellings per acre, and it is currently designated as ULDR (Urban Low Density Residential) transitioning to Medium Density Residential in the 2008 plan. Public water and sewer are extended to these areas and many of the lots had have already been re-zoned. Mr. Lyman felt that it was already properly addressed in the plan and no changes were necessary.

Comments on UAS regarding the designation of University of Alaska Southeast properties - The follow up that Mr. Lyman received later was that they understand that some UAS-owned properties really are appropriately designated for residential use and others really are appropriately designated for institutional or public use, not every university-owned property is an institutional property. Some of it is for the land-grant university intended to be sold off for residential development, so we wouldn't want to have it in institutional designation.

Chapter 12, Public and Private Utilities and Facilities - Water plan relating to watersheds, some references relating to the drinking water plan, which was done as part of the AJ Mine investigation. The question was if the AJ Mine was to be opened, what would need to be done to the water system in order to protect the City's water system. So, it was much more of a technical plan of what they would need to get it done, but not a plan to manage the entire watershed.

Wireless Communication Facilities - This gets into policy a bit more and Mr. Lyman stated staff would like direction from the Planning Commission and the Assembly for this. He noted they might want to make some changes to the draft language regarding health impacts from wireless communication facilities, cell phone towers, etc. He said that they had received some detailed comments on the wireless communication facilities and expected to see more of those.

Chapters 13 through 18 – No comments were received prior to the closing date for comments for this meeting (4:30 p.m., February 14, 2013).

Mr. Lyman concluded by saying that he would be happy to answer questions or map out how staff would like to move forward with the overall review of the draft plan.

Vice-Chair Watson asked how he planned to categorize the comments, as some did not pertain to the Comprehensive Plan, so that the public can be assured it would be looked at in the future.

Mr. Lyman replied that he was going to continue to follow the current model in terms of organization by theme or by chapter. Comments that are not taken up with this plan update would be set aside for consideration in future Comprehensive Plan updates and labeled as such.

Vice-Chair Watson questioned if the comment pages would be numbered for next time. Mr. Lyman replied that it would be numbered.

Mr. Miller felt that the comments were presented well and just adding the page numbers or chapters would be helpful. He asked Mr. Lyman how they like to work through the review of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Lyman replied that there were some areas where they would want to go page by page or at least a couple of pages at a time and chapters that could be set aside until the final motion unless something egregious comes up.

Mr. Medina asked if they had the names for the people who submitted the comments in case the Commission had a question for them later on. Mr. Lyman responded that they did have the names. He noted that the form that was used for the handwritten comments did have contact information spaces at the top but not everyone filled that out. He stated that he has been trying to reply to the people directly (copies included in the packet).

Mr. Medina made known that he had taken advantage of Chair Satre's recommendation and e-mailed staff some recommended changes (formatting, grammatical etc.). He thought it was interesting that some of the comments the public had submitted showed that people had really done their homework.

Ms. Grewe stated it was interesting to see how many comments showed up. She suggested taking out comments that were out of scope and setting it aside for future plan updates; and choosing comments that were interested in substantive issues that were germane to the Comprehensive Plan and whether there should be changes considered. Ms. Grewe then pointed out that some chapters were almost completely rewritten and some only had minor changes.

Sensitive to the type of message they were sending to the public, she felt that the public should be made aware of why they were allowing only some chapters to be rewritten and others not.

Mr. Lyman explained that some chapters needed more work than others like the Energy chapter which ended up getting Southeast Hydropower involved, another potential supplier, who had not been in the picture previously; the Transportation chapter looked almost entirely new, but had been reorganized for clarity, with some new information about non-motorized transportation etc. He gave another example of the commission making a conscious decision of wanting JEDC to look at the Economic Development chapter because it definitely needed an update.

Ms. Grewe asked how many comments they had received in total. Mr. Lyman answered that he did not have count. Ms. Grewe then asked if he knew how many people had attended the public meetings. Mr. Lyman replied there had been somewhere between 5 to 10 at each of the public meetings and more for the Saturday meeting which went all day. Mr. Lyman added that they had received quite a few comments via e-mail and hard copy as well. Ms. Grewe thanked Mr. Lyman for the explanation on why they had done only minor revisions in some places and substantive in others. She thought that the Planning Commission had confused the issue by saying repeatedly in the public forum that they were only doing minor revisions.

Mr. Haight said that as they move to the next round, they would be choosing different chapters to concentrate on and some of the chapters they had put a lot of effort into would not require as much in the future. Mr. Haight suggested that if they receive comments that do not agree with what they have done, they might have to take a moment or two to address those but felt that 95% of the work would be done in just going through the comments and choosing the ones that pertain to this update.

Ms. Lawfer stated that she would send the minor corrections to staff directly but felt that some comments have to be addressed as a group like the one on Housing Elements. She thought it would be valuable to include possible manners to encourage action by the CBJ or the community to rehabilitate and bring those back into housing stock. She felt that they had probably alluded to it, but hadn't really discussed. Ms. Lawfer asked if that was something they could look specifically for with regards to buildings that should and could be rehabilitated, the role of the City as well as other organizations, and how they could possibly make that happen. Ms. Lawfer felt that was an excellent point and wanted to make sure it was covered in the plan.

Ms. Lawfer then referred to the Energy packet, specifically talking about geothermal heating, she thought they were dealing with all alternatives and technologies (6.1), not just geothermal. She felt that tomorrow it might turn out to be something completely different and didn't want to box themselves into only one energy source. She urged the Commissioners to look at 6.1 and address that part.

Ms. Lawfer then went on to address Wireless Communications, specifically about deleting the word "encourage" and inserting "require" and then in another place to delete "encourage" and insert the word "preferred". She questioned if they wanted to look at the word 'preferred' instead of 'require'. She thought it would add more focus to the implementing plan.

Ms. Lawfer asked if Public Works had a water plan with regards to Salmon Creek if it went offline. She asked how they would address the water needs of the community, whether it be through emergency, or emergency preparedness and then long-term planning with regards to water.

Mr. Lyman responded that the only time they have ever needed to take water out of Salmon Creek was when Gold Creek was at very low flows, which he said was 1 or 2 days every 10 years or 20 years. If they were to put in the filtration system and upgrade the Salmon Creek Reservoir System, then they wouldn't need to rely on Gold Creek as much as they did, but currently Gold Creek was the only system capable of serving the entire city, and so they just used Salmon Creek to offset that. He said that was covered under this, but it wasn't the intent of the document (an Engineering document and not a Public Works document). Mr. Lyman explained that Public Works essentially maintains and operates the systems and the Engineering Department designs them.

Mr. Bishop expressed his hesitation over making too many changes to the plan at this point in time because he thought the plan needed substantial changes on the whole, but that they didn't want to spend too much time spinning their wheels with a plan that needed a major update rather than a review. He thought that they still needed substantial changes in terms of how they assign responsibility for implementation, how it gets integrated into the City CIP, and how they make people responsible for the implementation of the plan. Mr. Bishop noted that it was not their intent right now. He felt strongly that they should look at the comments from the public very closely and make sure the changes recommended are addressed.

Vice-Chair Watson mentioned that he had the opportunity to attend three of the public meetings and what he found encouraging was that people had taken the time to go through the document and provide some excellent comments. He commented about looking at Chapter 4 - Housing Element, Chapter 5 - Economic Development, Transportation and Land Use again before signing it off to the Assembly. He summarized by saying that he knew the public had been talking to some of the Assembly members, making phone calls and sending e-mails and he felt the people now had a groundswell of enthusiasm. Vice-Chair Watson opined that when they do the full update, they could set forth a group of people to figure out what kind of Comprehensive Plan template they really wanted.

Mr. Lyman mentioned that the document was labeled "Draft" and acknowledged some technical difficulties in dealing with Microsoft Word in terms of formatting issues with this very long document with multiple charts and graphs. He stated that they were trying to get a new software product to put the document together without losing the changes already done. Mr. Lyman said he appreciated everyone's patience with the mislabeled and misformatted parts.

Mr. Hart stated he had attended each of the meetings and summarized their comments saying that the document is huge and cumbersome and hard to grasp it all in one evening; some folks liked the new Anchorage plan because it was more streamlined, had color graphics, was more user-friendly and easy to understand. He said that was a larger conversation outside of this update but



a really important conversation. Mr. Hart thought that people were very thankful for the effort made to come out to their community. He mentioned giving more notice ahead of time. He estimated about 40-42 people had participated in the process.

Mr. Miller expressed his appreciation of the other commissioner's comments, especially suggestions about how best to deal with the public comments. He acknowledged Ms. Lawfers' comment about not getting boxed in on one particular technology and reminded everyone of how hydroelectric was included in the Energy chapter which was a big technology push in the 2008 plan.

Ms. Lawfer asked staff if they could get the comments sooner, so they could review them over the weekend.

Mr. Lyman responded that any comments received after the deadline would be presented at the next meeting (either the March 12th meeting of the next Committee of the Whole meeting). He said staff would try to get them the packet in a timely manner, even up to the last meeting where the Commission votes on recommending the Comprehensive Plan to be forwarded to the Assembly. He added that they would do their best to organize everything and present everything to the Commission in a digestible format.

Mr. Haight proposed that they take the comments received, study them thoroughly and be prepared for next the meeting.

Ms. Grewe suggested perhaps having a quick discussion on what they would like to report back to the public after their first work session of hearing comments.

Vice-Chair Watson stated that they would stay away from specific issues related to land use and such.

Ms. Grewe commented on the review timeline. Mr. Lyman said that they had been trying to get it out, unfortunately their comment forms said comments must be received by a certain date and time, but it was only to get the comments to the commissioners on time. Ms. Grewe then asked if there was a note on the homepage saying that comments would be accepted all the way through the Assembly. Mr. Lyman responded saying that it has been drafted and approved by Mr. Hart but he didn't know if it has been posted to their Comprehensive Plan webpage yet.

Ms. Grewe next commented on the General Organizational section - lengthy nature of the plan and the complexity of the document with relation to the size of the community. She stated that a simplified table of contents without the subsection headings would be helpful in resolving some of the complexity issues. She also suggested adding some sort of a help section as to how to use this document.

Mr. Miller said he liked the idea about a simplified table of contents but also liked the current more comprehensive one and suggested maybe having the first page with just the chapter and

page number, which would be very helpful; he added that he did not have an issue with the length of the document, so long as it incorporated all the necessary and useful information.

Mr. Lyman explained that there were different fonts used in the 2008 plan and some of it did not translate well with the current update (formatting, e.g. table of contents did not reflect correct page numbers, figures numbered incorrectly etc.) but they have tried to get it modified as best possible. He stated that they would continue to work on it and were looking into some new software that could help with the situation.

Vice-Chair Watson mentioned more for the public than the commissioners, that Mr. Lyman had inherited this project when it was about a third into the process and it has been a daunting challenge to get the document to where it is today.

Mr. Haight asked if the table of contents could be reissued as a separate document. Mr. Lyman stated that they could do that.

Mr. Medina mentioned that initially when he started to review the document it was overwhelming, but in breaking it down and reviewing it a chapter at a time, he actually started to enjoy reading it.

Mr. Bishop stated that he did have issues with the size of it because he found it cumbersome and difficult to get through, but his biggest problem was there was no ownership to it. He stated that the next time they ought to work towards condensing it down to more of a workable document and not make it an encyclopedia of all that they believe in.

Mr. Lyman brought up a concern regarding implementation. He mentioned that there was a disconnect within the various City agencies and between various government agencies and the public's understanding of how the Comprehensive Plan is implemented and what the priorities were. There were a lot of implementing actions and projects described in the Plan, but some things that a lot of Comprehensive Plans had that theirs didn't, was a prioritization matrix of the implementing actions. They didn't have a schedule of near-term, mid-term, long-term changes, whether they were changes to their Land Use Codes, new financing tools or changes in how taxes related. So staff had discussed with City Management the possibility of coming back perhaps this summer or relatively near future before the 2015 update and doing an appendix or an update to the implementation chapter where they would include how they were going to prioritize things and how it would affect the public or the various agencies.

Ms. Lawfer appreciated Mr. Lyman's comment and said she was thinking very specifically of the Affordable Housing and the Economic Development chapters because there were so many different people working on so many different elements and it would be helpful to get everybody thinking along the same priority line or at least having a discussion of the priorities and how they were going to do it.

Vice-Chair Watson agreed with Mr. Bishop that they could take out some of the lengthy history portions from the plan. He also thought that there were too many implementing actions in some

of the chapters. He also mentioned maybe cleaning up some of the contradictory verbiage to make it more business friendly, because he felt that some portions almost scare away businesses, which was not their intent.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** *by Mr. Miller to adjourn the meeting.*

*The meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.*