

Skagit County Planning Commission

Meeting Summary – December 3, 2019

Retreat at Skagit River Brewery-Mount Vernon

Members in Attendance

Tim Rashko	Amy Hughes	Kathy Mitchell	Annie Lohman
Mark Lundsten	Joe Woodmansee	Tammy Candler	Martha Rose

Others in Attendance

Julie Nicoll, Deputy Prosecutor, Skagit County Prosecuting Attorney
Hal Hart, Director, Skagit County Planning Department
Michael Cerbone, Assistant Director, Skagit County Planning Department
Peter Gill, Long Range Planning Manager, Skagit County Planning Department
Kim Adams, Administrative Coordinator, Skagit County Planning Department

Call to Order, Introductions

Tim Rashko called the meeting to order at 7:17 pm

Discussions:

Tim Rashko began the meeting with the intent of having an informal meeting with no chair recognition to get everyone on the same page to have better support and understanding of what the mission is for the Planning Commission.

Julie Nicoll presented on Ex Parte Communication and provided a handout. Julie made herself available at all times to staff and the Planning Commission to help answer any questions, she prefers to not provide legal guidance on camera. It was suggested that the Bylaws may want to be updated in the future to be clearer on what the Planning Commission roles are.

Other Discussion topics:

- Talking to community members if confronted outside of meeting is okay.
- Encourage sharing those informal communications with the rest of the PC at meeting is encouraged.
- Open Public Meetings Act-Bring research, discuss with the board, post online- best practice being discussion on camera at the Planning Commission meeting
- A workgroup gathering 1-4 people is okay to research and discuss a topic and then bring information back to the meeting for discussion with the Board. Five people would be a Quorum and is considered conducting business.
- Kathy Mitchell suggested that the Chair appoint a sub-committee in these times when more research and discussion are needed on a particular topic.
- Mark Lundsten suggested not “replying-all” to emails. Best to have single conversations. Use email to transmit info to later deliberate at a meeting.
- If it is emails regarding Administrative information (i.e.: scheduling meetings) “reply-all” is acceptable.
- If communicating via email share the information later at the meeting on camera for transparency.

- What are the roles of the Planning Department Staff:
 - Preparing Agendas
 - Developing draft proposals and code
 - Posting information online
 - Planning meetings
 - Researching background information/Providing unbiased information and presenting alternative ways to present to the Planning Commission
 - Administrative Support
- Communication with the Planning Commission & PDS Staff is important, need to feel comfortable asking for clarification or more information to help avoid confusion and provide transparency. Communication depends on personal preference- try and best communicate your needs.
- Staff asked if it is okay for PC to reach out to staff for more information, once public documents are posted online. Staff can go back and ask for clarification from applicant, update a staff report, send to Planning Commission members to review prior the meeting and then present it at a meeting for discussion.
- Staff writes code, but it is reasonable for the Planning Commission to change wording, take some out, elaborate more, then present final at the meeting.
- Kathy Mitchell commented that more workshops may be helpful to everyone to be clear and on the same page with discussions and suggested:
 - Getting the information (Docket item)
 - Having workshops to see what exactly is being requested
 - Gather any additional information necessary (get clarification on what the requester is really wanting)
 - Then deliberate and make the decision together
- Mark Lundsten suggested information needs to be in layman's terms so people are able to understand and able to discuss the information with the public. Asking questions from the applicant for clarification is acceptable.
- Should the Applicant come in front of the Planning Commission right away?
- Limit presentation time for applicants at a work session on Docket items?
- Michael Cerbone suggested the 1st meeting should be on setting a timeline on how to handle the docket item then proceed with work sessions on gathering the necessary information needed.
- Chair stated that he did not always understand why a particular regulation or change is needed. This should be the first point of discussion.
- Chair asked what was the best way to develop new code
- Annie Lohman stated that they used to go through code successfully during workshops. These workshops were great way to get through material.
- It was stated that staff develops drafts as part of the proposal

- Annie Lohman stated to remember to be open to changes being made at any time. Try to be more understanding of the group effort not just the work of one person.
- Annie Lohman stated that despite best intentions to develop clear code, that administration of the code can have unintended consequences. How to develop clearer code that is not misinterpreted?
- Staff mentioned that everything in the record can be used to interpret the code. Skagit has good record keeping, and even video that can be used to clarify code.
- Policy interpretations are one way to remedy code that has unforeseen and unintended consequences.
- Should the petitioner provide testimony at the PC? How much time? At a workshop? Is it more than the public hearing, 3 minutes?
- Some places offer the petitioner 10 minutes to state the reason for their proposal before public testimony.
- Tim Rashko requested having a follow up meeting regarding the other Agenda topics that were not discussed. Kim Adams will reach out and discuss a date and location in January. Specific items to discuss in follow up meeting:
 - More opportunities for education and training (Peter Gill present)
 - Website Navigation
 - Mapping Software
- Annie Lohman requested to have a printed meeting calendar update on the Agenda

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:46 pm