



**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
501 North Anderson Street, Ellensburg WA 98926**

MINUTES OF ELLENSBURG CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Date and Time: Planning Commission Meeting of March 11, 2021 at 5:45 p.m.
Place of Meeting: Virtual Zoom Meeting
Present: Beverly Heckart, Fred Padjen, Ed Harrell, Geraldine O'Mahony, George Bottcher, Sathy Rajendran, Gayl Curtiss
Absent: George Bottcher
Others Present: Community Development Director Kirsten Sackett; Planning Manager Jamey Ayling; Council Liaison Stacey Engel

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Padjen called the meeting to order at 5:48 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Heckart moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Rajendran seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Heckart moved to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting as presented by staff. Commissioner Rajendran seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

4. NEW BUSINESS

5. OLD BUSINESS

6. CITIZEN COMMENT

No members of the public in attendance.

7. STAFF UPDATE

a. Staff Training for Commissioners

Planning Manager introduced the training topic for the evening. He shared another Short Course training video from the Dept of Commerce – "Updating your Comp Plan".

Speaker Bill Grimes talked about various approaches to updating a Comprehensive Plan, as well as the reasons why a Plan might need to be updated. He stated that it is always important to keep the Plan up to date with state or regional changes, and to stay current with changes within your own community. The Plan may also need to consider updating infrastructure or other system-wide improvements. He then explained the importance of the feedback loop, which allows you to determine how well the Plan is working, and which also allows you to reassess priorities.

Grimes stated that there are several issues to be considered in your Comp Plan update, including planning for climate change and weather events, to help plan for resilient and adaptable communities. Other issues to consider include the change in lifestyle patterns of different demographics, and the advances in new technologies. These issues drive our economy and the economy drives our development response. It's likely that policy response will deal with physical mobility, local food production and other responses so that we can meet the demands of this generation and those to follow.

Grimes said that a jurisdiction should plan on spending about two years on the Comp Plan update process.

A typical Update process includes:

- Announce Update Plan – be public with this first step
- Review your existing plan
- Review your community

The Dept of Commerce provides a helpful checklist to help you identify the scope of the work to come. The next step involves looking at your community's existing vision, then vetting it, and affirming it. This leads to the next steps in the update process:

- Consider and evaluate alternatives to achieve visions
- Update plan policies, maps & text - to ensure an internally consistent document
- Review implementation strategies
 - This is important! This is how you will make your policies become a reality! This will feed into how you later review and amend your development regulations.
- Update Regulations
- Adopt by the deadline!
 - This keeps your community eligible for certain State grants and loans

The dept of commerce has prepared a comp plan update checklist to aid communities. When you look at the community's existing vision, you will want to vet it with the community.

Options for updating your Comp Plan might vary by community.

Update Options:

Plan still working:

- Focus on tweaks and implementation

Local Discord (which may have nothing to do with planning):

- Focus on building trust
- Focus on building communication channels
- Create a policy framework that is clear and compelling
- Focus on the Future

Fiscal Pinch:

- Identify fiscal priorities and opportunities

Each community deserves a deliberate and tailored approach.

Update Process Tips:

- Transparency
 - This is a function of staff and the planning commission
- Keep a Record
 - Every meeting, every decision made, is kept in a project record, so the process can be tracked from the beginning to the actual adoption of the Plan Update.
 - Updates are supposed to be based on public input and guidance, but this is also ESSENTIAL to creating a plan that is adoptable and supported by your community at large.
- Engaging public process
 - People should want to participate
 - And participation is meaningful and rewarded every step of the way
- Examples - of the type of vision you are after
 - Share pictures of communities that have been successful
 - Make sure people understand the consequences of their policy action
- Implementation
 - Need to get buy-in and commitment, so that when the Update is adopted, people are eager to turn it to reality.
 - You also need to make sure you leave ample time during the public hearing consideration process. It will almost always take longer than you expect.
- Budget realistically
 - Over the long run, the money you spent on the planning process will pay itself back in dividends multiple times over. It will help a community agree on priorities to better qualify for grants and loans in the future. It will also help you identify projects that can come together for efficiency

Resources to help with plan Update are available on the Dept of Commerce website.

At the conclusion of the training video, Ayling reminded the Commission that the City will be developing the new DEI chapter over the next year. Chair Padjen asked about a GMA amendment proposed by the legislature to required that all communities address climate change. Staff provided some information about docketing and time frames. Commissioner Curtiss asked if the Commission is going to be revising the Comp Plan, or when does it expire. Ayling responded that the next required update is 2026. The plan is a 20-year plan, so it is valid over that time period, however Updates are required by Commerce every 8 years. Jurisdictions are also allowed to amend the Comp Plan on an annual basis through a docketing process. Director Sackett also provided an explanation on the difference of the annual amendment process and the broader scale Update process required every 8 years.

Commissioner O'Mahony asked if there a plan to address planning for a pandemic. Sackett said that this type of planning might be more relevant to the Hazard Mitigation Plan for the County. She said this was updated in the last two years, but she said it was focused more on responding to natural disasters. Ayling stated that the document would need to be one that was easily available, and not shelved. O'Mahony wondered if pandemic planning could lead to more thoughts on outdoor recreation, outdoor dining, HVAC standards, etc. Sackett said that Staff could look into this concept.

Padjen asked about the plan for updating Capital Improvements Plan, and Staff provided an explanation of how the 6-year CIP's are updating every year through the annual amendment process.

O'Mahony asked about heat proofing, and a recognition that the ambient temperature is increasing. Ayling said that right now developments are required to build to the Eastern Washington stormwater manual, it could

The Commission asked various questions about developments that are taking place. Staff provided some updates on some of the recently submitted projects.

Planning Manager Ayling then led the Commission into the next training topic. He put together a handout that came from the Planner's web service that provided "Advice for Planning Commissioners". It includes advice for Planning Commissioners, as shared by individuals who had either served on Commissions, or served as Staff to Commisison's. He shared that document on the screen, and talked through many of the tips provided. He said that he would also email the handout to the Commissioners.

Discussion then ensued on the some areas of interest of the Commissioners. Rajendren is new to the group and is still learning about the Commission and his role. He is interested in making sure the Gateway project is aesthetically pleasing. Curtiss said she is passionate about the historic district and maintaining the vibrance of downtown and its businesses. Heckart wants to ensure that the Center of the City remains strong, because that is where the identity of the community is located. She also knows we need to increase the density, especially by reducing the amount of R-S zoning. Harrell said he knows the community is going to grow a lot, and as it grows he would like to ensure it remains a pleasant place to live. Development standards need to remain appropriate, with good landscaping standards. He also agrees that the downtown needs to be maintained. Padjen said he has always been interested in keeping the historic core healthy, but also developing neighborhood cores adjacent to downtown. Would like to see more mixed-use development and greater density in the outlying areas. We also need to make sure we stay ahead of the fossil fuel areas. O'Mahony had a motivation in that with two small children she wants to see an emphasis that our developments are inclusive and diverse.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Padjen adjourned the meeting at 6:54 pm.