



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

MINUTES OF ELLENSBURG CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Date and Time: Planning Commission Meeting of August 5, 2021 at 5:45 p.m.

Place of Meeting: Hybrid - In Person and Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present (in Person): Beverly Heckart, Fred Padjen, Ed Harrell, Sathy Rajendran, Sigrid Davison, Geraldine O'Mahony (arrived in person 17 minutes after originally joining via zoom).

Present (Virtual): George Bottcher

Absent:

Others Present: Community Development Director Kirsten Sackett; Planning Manager Jamey Ayling.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Padjen called the meeting to order at 5:46 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Heckart approved the agenda as submitted. Commissioner Rajendran seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Heckart moved to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2021 Planning Commission meeting with corrections. Commissioner Bottcher seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

At this point in the meeting, new commissioner Sigrid Davison was introduced.

4. NEW BUSINESS

5. OLD BUSINESS

None.

6. CITIZEN COMMENT

No members of the public in attendance.

7. STAFF UPDATE

a. Housing Action Plan Update

Planning Manager Ayling said that the Commission would be discussing the Policy Review section of the draft Housing Action Plan (HAP). He said that the strategies for addressing the housing challenges had been discussed with several different groups to date. He shared his screen and said that this meeting could be an open forum for discussion on the strategies.

Commissioner Heckart asked if this was the final draft, and Director Sackett responded that it is a preliminary draft of the policy review, which is just a piece of the entire Housing Action Plan. Director Sackett then gave a review of the process to date, what the goals are, and what the next steps will be. She explained that the policy review is a required element of the HAP, but that Staff made a specific request to the consultant to review only certain parts of the code that City Staff has found to be problematic. She noted that the townhouse and cottage housing standards have never been used, and neither have the existing Density Bonus Standards. Staff also requested a review of the density standards in ECC 15.320, as they are also sometimes restrictive.

She said that the HAP will not solve all of our development challenges, but that the document can be viewed similar to the Comp Plan which provides overarching direction. City Council will set the priorities for which strategies should be implemented first, but it is the commission's role to make recommendations to Council. Once the priorities are set, the Commission will dive into the deeper work of analyzing and amending the land development code.

The commissioners noted some concerns about the document. Commissioner Heckart felt that the document was simply a review of the development code, and did not address the problem of affordable housing. Chairman Padjen suggested that the Commission review the document page by page and make suggestions for changes or additions. Commissioner Davison asked about the restrictions in place for cottage housing developments. Ayling shared the code standards for the cottage housing standards on the overhead screen. Discussion ensued about this section, what it includes and how it was adopted, after which the Commission recommended that the cottage housing not be included as a strategy in the HAP.

Commissioner O'Mahony brought up discussion about the impacts of climate change on housing and felt that there should be some mention of this in the HAP. Director Sackett noted that the State would likely be requiring a chapter on climate change be included in the Comp Plan within the next couple of years, at which time the City will do additional studies on this topic.

Discussion continued with the Townhome code section and how the city can encourage this type of housing, in addition to other types of missing middle. Sackett said that the point of this is to increase the overall housing stock in the City, which will help to level out the market prices. Commissioners noted concerns with the affordability of housing.

There was some discussion on the data found on the existing affordable housing dashboard. Staff noted that the information would be updated after the Housing Needs Assessment and HAP were adopted.

Chair Padjen said that the commissioners could review the housing action plan document and forward any feedback to staff. Discussion ensued about the next steps and timing, and Sackett reminded the Commission that the HAP needed to be submitted to Commerce by October 7. After that the City would begin working on implementing the strategies in the HAP.

The Commission then reviewed the existing 12 strategies in the HAP, and staff asked for any additions or revisions to the strategies. Sackett said that the HAP would be a guide for the Commission to make more detailed changes to the code at a later date.

In discussing next steps, Sackett said that a public hearing needed to be held at the next meeting to consider an ordinance that would revise the regulations for development in the floodplains. As such there would be limited time for further discussion the Housing Action Plan at future meetings. She encouraged the Commissioners to also spend time outside of the meeting reviewing the document and sending any revisions to Staff.

Sackett said that the list of strategies would be revised soon based on recent conversations with City management, the Affordable Housing Commission and the Stakeholder Advisory Group. When updated it will be shared with the Commission. There was also discussion on some zoning code amendments that were discussed by the Commission a couple of years ago, which would be coming before them in a public hearing within the next couple of months.

One suggestion from the Commission was that the City research how they can be in the business of constructing affordable housing units. In response to questions, Ayling explained the functions of the Affordable Housing Commission and their administration of the affordable housing sales tax funds, and their recommendations for use of city surplus property.

Additional strategies were discussed by the Commission which would be included in the next version of the HAP to be reviewed at the next meeting.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Padjen adjourned the meeting at 7:53 pm.