



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

MINUTES OF ELLENSBURG CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Date and Time: Planning Commission Meeting of September 23, 2021 at 5:45 p.m.

Place of Meeting: Hybrid - In Person at City Hall, 501 N. Anderson Street, and Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present (in Person): Fred Padjen

Present (Virtual): Ed Harrell, Sathy Rajendran and Beverly Heckart

Absent: Sigrid Davison, Geraldine O'Mahony and George Bottcher

Others Present: Community Development Director Kirsten Sackett (in-person); Rich Elliott Council Liaison (in-person)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Padjen called the meeting to order at 5:45 pm.

Commissioner Heckart made a motion to excuse Commissioners Davison and O'Mahony from the meeting. Commissioner Harrel seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Heckart asked for approval of the agenda as submitted. Commissioner Rajendran seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Minutes of September 2, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting. Commissioner Heckert moved to approve the minutes with an edit previously submitted to Staff. Commissioner Rajendran seconded. All in favor, motion passed

4. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Public Hearing (Legislative) for Consideration of Ellensburg Housing Action Plan

Director Sackett said that the purpose of the public hearing was to review the Housing Action Plan that has been developed over the past several months. She provided some background on the housing crisis experienced in the State with a severe undersupply of housing needed to keep up with population growth. She said during the 2019 legislative session, HB 1923 was passed which encouraged cities that are planning under the GMA to take actions to increase residential building capacity. HB 1923 also provided grant money to make this possible. The City applied for this funding to develop a Housing Action Plan (HAP), and because of our population size we were awarded \$50,000.00. The funds were used to hire Berk Consulting to work with staff in crafting the HAP. Some of the required elements of the HAP were to have a current Housing Needs Assessment, incorporate community and stakeholder engagement, review the City's housing policy framework, and the development of strategies that would promote new housing. Sackett stated that HAP is currently out for SEPA review, and comments received will be taken into

account before a final HAP is sent to Commerce. Director Sackett shared her screen to show the report that shows the steps that were taken to get to this point.

Chair Padjen called for public testimony but no one was present from the public. He then closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Heckart moved that the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council prioritize the following strategies listed on page 20 of the City Housing Action Plan, dated Sept. 9, 2021:

Strategies numbered: 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14

Heckart also motioned that Strategy #4 should also be prioritized but re-worded to read "encourage the construction of multi-unit housing" rather than multi-plex. Rajendran seconded.

Commissioner Heckart explained the reasoning for her motion. She said she looked up the term multi-plex and it is complicated, and recommends that it be reworded to multi-unit.

Heckart explained that she wanted to prioritize rather than swallow the housing action plan whole. According to the report there are two demographics that are affected by the housing shortage - the elderly singles and students. The report also stresses again and again that we are missing the middle housing. She said that row houses are single-family residences, not the missing middle. What we need are duplexes and rental units, that are studios or one-bedroom units. The commission should ask the Council to prioritize the things we really need to target now and in the immediate future.

Commissioner Harrel said he didn't object to the motion. He understands that when Council adopts the HAP, there will be a lot of work that will continue to take place. He felt that what Heckart proposed won't preclude the other strategies; we just need to prioritize the ones in the motion and the others can be addressed at a later date. Implementation will come down to passing new development regulations. There is still a lot of discussion to be had before anything is set in concrete.

Chair Padjen called the motion. All in favor; motion passed

Commissioner Heckart moved that the Planning Commission recommends to the Council to pursue the construction of housing similar to the existing housing at Briarwood, Huntington Courts 1 and 2, and the Brookwood apartments or other similar developments. Rajendran seconded.

Commissioner Heckart explained that she made this motion because those housing types are useful and aesthetically pleasing, and are income restricted units for elderly singles. Commissioner Harrell asked how they are financed. Heckart did not know but she said they were income-restricted developments. She felt they were worthy of replicating. Chair Padjen said he isn't familiar enough with those development to support the motion. Harrell said he thinks those are federally funded and would encourage the City to continue looking for that kind of funding.

Chair Padjen called for the motion. One in favor was Commissioner Heckart. Those opposed included Commissioners Padjen, Harrell and Rajendran. Motion failed.

Commissioner Heckart made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council to cooperate with Central Washington University to ensure that they provide housing that cost-burdened students will rent. Commissioner Rajendran seconded.

Commissioner Heckart said those impacted most by lack of missing middle housing are the students. Her fear is that the University is going to build more units that come with strings attached, or that they will build units that have rents the students cannot pay. She would like to see CWU make plans for future housing that will make it to where students actually want to rent from the university. She knows that students leave campus because they feel they can't afford university housing.

Commissioner Harrell said it is a good point to make and definitely something to pursue as we

implement the housing action plan as we go ahead.

Commissioner Heckart said that the whole nation is suffering from an affordable housing shortage and there is something wrong with the industry. They are not providing the necessary supply.

Motion Failed

Chair Padjen made a motion to recommend to City Council that they adopt the housing action plan with the consideration expressed regarding an emphasis on the points that Heckart emphasized.

Commissioner Rajendran seconded. All in favor except that Commissioner Heckart abstained.

Commissioner Harrell moved that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation to Council to adopt the Housing Action Plan, including in the motion the motion made by Beverly Heckart, Commissioner Rajendran seconded.

The motion was reworded to include all aspects of Heckart's previous motions:

The Planning Commission forward a recommendation to Council to adopt the Housing Action Plan, and also recommends that the City Council prioritize the strategies listed on page 20 of the City Housing Action Plan, dated Sept. 9, 2021 as follows:

Strategies numbered: 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14

Strategy #4 should also be prioritized but re-worded to read "encourage the construction of multi-unit housing".

Commissioner Rajendran seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

5. OLD BUSINESS

6. CITIZEN COMMENT

No members of the public in attendance.

7. STAFF UPDATE

a. Discussion on Housing Action Plan Implementation Grant

Director Sackett said the Department of Commerce has opened a new round of grants for communities to implement the strategies outlined in any adopted Housing Action Plans. There are many things the City could consider pursuing to use the money strategically.

Commissioner Heckart thinks what should be implemented right away is what is missing – one bedroom and studio housing. Commissioner Heckart fears that the money won't really get change done, and she fears that there will be a push to dumb down the development code.

Chair Padjen said he would like to see an emphasis on setting aside space for the growth of manufactured housing parks. MHP's are on the periphery of most towns in Central Washington. He wants to expand the opportunities for transients housing. He would also like to see room for transient housing – motor homes and trailers in a decent organized way for people to live in those.

Commissioner Harrell thinks it is worth discussing ideas to manage the idea but would hate to see a bunch of unkempt trailer parks in town. Chair Padjen would like to encourage the building of mobile home parks that would allow a quality project, rather than a junky trailer park or something that we want to get rid of. Director Sackett said the verbiage in the code for manufactured home parks could be improved.

Commissioner Heckart asked what Chair Padjen's definition of "transient" housing means. He said that would have to be determined through future discussions.

Commissioner Harrell would like to see some funding go towards code updates and zoning updates. Commissioner Heckart also thinks we will look at the density standards and changes to allow more duplex and multifamily in the different zones.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Padjen adjourned the meeting at 6:35 pm.