

**City of Gig Harbor Planning Commission
Minutes of Work-Study Session
Thursday, November 18, 2004
Gig Harbor Civic Center**

PRESENT: Commissioners Theresa Malich, Kathy Franklin, Carol Johnson, Dick Allen, Bruce Gair, Scott Wagner and Chairperson Paul Kadzik. Staff present: John Vodopich, Steve Osguthorpe, Kristin Riebli, and Diane Gagnon.

CALL TO ORDER: 6:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of November 4, 2004 Johnson/Franklin – unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Comprehensive Plan Update – Code and Policy Study Session #5

Community Development Director John Vodopich explained to the Planning Commission that this would be the final work-study session with them and that they would need to make a final recommendation to the City Council for their meeting of November 22, 2004.

Mr. Vodopich then briefed the Planning Commission on the proposal from AHBL for the new Chapter 17.92 Mineral Resource Lands and read the requirements to notify property owners who are within 400 feet of a site designated as mineral resource land. Chairman Kadzik asked if city staff would be responsible for the notification process. Planning Manager Steve Osguthorpe answered that staff would contact the Department of Natural Resources to determine any areas presently operating under a valid surface mining permit. The Planning Commission agreed to the proposed language in the new section.

The next item for discussion was the Airport Overlay District. Commissioner Gair asked why we were calling the airport an “essential public facility” and John Vodopich replied that the definition of essential public facilities includes airports.

Commissioner Gair stated that in section 2.3.2 it states that “The City intends to support continued growth and development of the general aviation airport facilities at Tacoma Narrows airport when consistent with the Gig Harbor Comprehensive Plan goals” and asked which goals were being referred to. It was decided that this was a general statement referring to all the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and that the word “all” should be inserted to reflect that. Mr. Gair further expressed concern with voicing support of the airport’s continued growth. Mr. Vodopich suggested that the language “continued growth and development of” be removed and the Planning Commission agreed.

The discussion then continued to the next item which was new language supporting low impact development. Community Development Director John Vodopich read the proposed language to support low impact development methods to manage stormwater runoff on-site and the Planning Commission agreed with the language as presented.

Owen Dennison from AHBL presented the information on the Housing Element pointing out Table 3 which illustrates existing zoned capacity. Commissioner Gair asked about the new language following the table which references an excess cushion of 23 percent above the projected need and expressed a concern with maintaining excess housing capacity. Mr. Vodopich explained that the cushion was to accommodate projected growth and may never be developed. Owen Dennison continued to explain the difference between housing units and households and the vacancy rate.

Chairman Paul Kadzik clarified that basically we are changing the maximum density from 3 dwelling units per acre to 4 dwelling units per acre. Associate Planner Kristin Riebli pointed out that there is also a 30% incentive allowed for developing a planned residential development in those zones. It was agreed to remove the 30% bonus and the Planning Commission agreed with the density increase.

The Planning Commission then discussed Title 18 – Critical Areas. Owen Dennison reviewed the various changes. It was decided to discuss the proposed changes to the wetland buffers first.

Commissioner Scott Wagner asked the other Planning Commission members to review the matrix which had been distributed at the last meeting which compared the city's existing buffers with those proposed by the consultant and the range suggested by best available science.

Commissioner Johnson stated that we have to be sure that what we adopt is defensible and asked if our current buffers were. Commissioner Wagner stated that our current buffer widths were within the recommended range and expressed concern with doubling them. He then suggested that they be increased somewhat but not doubled.

Discussion followed on the changes to the categories and how they compared to our current categories. Commissioner Johnson pointed out that the proposed categories are more in line with the state.

Chairman Kadzik stated that the numbers proposed seemed to be in the conservative range and expressed the need to balance conservation with the needs of the community. Commissioner Wagner added that we needed to achieve 4 dwelling units per acre while still protecting the wetlands and that he didn't believe these large buffers accomplished that goal. He then recommended that the buffer for a Category 1 wetland remain at the suggested 200 feet and that Category II be changed to 75, Category III to 35 and Category IV to 25. Discussion followed on the state recommended ranges and whether those suggested fell within them. It was decided that that Planning Commission would recommend the following wetland buffers:

Category I – 200 feet
Category II – 100 feet
Category III – 50 feet
Category IV – 25 feet

Owen Dennison then went over the changes to the section on buffer reductions, pointing out that the current regulation states that degraded buffers may be enhanced and reduced to not less than 50 percent and that they were suggesting that it be changed to 70 percent.

Chairman Kadzik asked for clarification of a degraded buffer and Planning Manager Steve Osguthorpe stated that staff does not have the knowledge to determine the quality of a buffer and would rely on a certified wetland specialist hired by the proponent.

Commissioner Johnson suggested that the allowance be changed to 55 percent and the Planning Commission agreed.

Associate Planner Kristin Riebli cautioned that there may be situations where a wetland may be willfully degraded in order to utilize the buffer reduction. Commissioner Wagner expressed concern for how it would be determined what was willful as animals and farming can degrade a wetland. Chairman Kadzik suggested that language be added stating buffer reduction will not be allowed if the buffer degradation is a result of a documented code violation and the Planning Commission agreed.

The next item for discussion was the new section on streams. Planning Manager Steve Osguthorpe explained that we don't currently have a section on streams. Commissioner Wagner asked what types of streams we have in the city and Mr. Osguthorpe answered that Donkey Creek, Crescent Creek and their tributaries probably fell within the type 2 and 3 categories. The Planning Commission agreed with the recommendation of AHBL.

The Planning Commission then discussed the wetland buffer replacement ratios. Associate Planner Kristin Riebli read from the current code noting that the ratios being proposed were only a slight increase in the lower categories.

Commissioner Franklin noted that these ratios seem to balance both the environmental interests and property owner interests. The Planning Commission agreed with the recommended ratios.

Owen Dennison then asked the Planning Commission to go over the introduction noting that the numbers had been updated to reflect current information.

Chairman Paul Kadzik then asked if there was any other discussion and stated that a motion for recommendation would be appropriate at this time.

MOTION: Move to recommend the City Council approve the 2004 Comprehensive Plan as modified. Johnson/Franklin – unanimously approved.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

December 2, 2004 at 6pm – Work-Study Session

Commissioner Bruce Gair noted that he would not be attending the meetings of December 2nd and 16th, 2004.

Commissioner Kathy Franklin stated that she would also be absent from the meeting of December 2nd.

ADJOURN:

MOTION: Move to adjourn at 7:40 p.m.
Johnson/Malich – unanimously approved

CD recorder utilized:
Disc #1 Track 1
Disc #2 Track 1