

**City of Gig Harbor Planning Commission
Minutes of Work-Study Session
December 20th, 2007
Gig Harbor Civic Center**

PRESENT: Commissioners Jim Pasin, Jill Guernsey, Jeane Derebey, Joyce Ninen, Theresa Malich, and Dick Allen. Commissioner Harris Atkins was absent. Staff present: Jennifer Kester, Tom Dolan, Dick Bower and Diane Gagnon.

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Move to approve minutes of November 15th with a typographical correction on the 1st page. Guernsey/Ninen – Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of December 6th with a typographical correction on page 2. Ninen/Allen – Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

1. **City of Gig Harbor, 3510 Grandview Street, Gig Harbor WA 98335** – Proposal by the City Council to amend the definition of gross floor area; create definitions for underground parking, basement, finished grade, and original grade; amend parking requirements to include maximum number of parking spaces for uses; and reconsider the maximum building sizes for WC, WM and WR zones.

Building Official Dick Bower went over building codes as they relate to underground structures addressing attics and gross floor area. He stated that attics by definition are from the bottom of the trusses to the actual roof framing if you have bonus room trusses they are not counted as attic space. Mr. Bower went on to say that under the building code if you count it as storage it has to have certain head space and other requirements and if there is unfinished space in an attic, then it really isn't counted toward gross floor area. Senior Planner Jennifer Kester said that Mr. Bower had suggested putting a head room definition within the definition of attic. Mr. Bower added that when you get to the point of 7' then it is habitable space. He then went over the definitions of habitable versus livable.

Commissioner Jeane Derebey arrived at 6:10.

Discussion followed on rooms where there is only seven feet head room at the peak. Mr. Bower said that only the area that has seven feet of head room would be counted. Commissioner Jill Guernsey asked about the definition of attic and unfinished space asking for clarification on finished space with less than seven feet of headroom. Planning Manager Tom Dolan presented a scenario where there is a daylight basement

with a top floor with head room of 6'11" that is not going to count under the building code.

Commissioner Jim Pasin asked why do we care. Ms. Kester noted that the addition of dormers and things can change the bulk and scale of a building. Mr. Pasin noted that the Design Manual does require dormers in some instances to break up a roof plane. Commissioner Dick Allen pointed out that someone could have additional square footage without counting it and Mr. Pasin replied that there is still a roof whether it's finished or unfinished space and there is a height restriction. Commissioner Joyce Ninen pointed out that the gross floor area limitation only applies in the waterfront zones. Mr. Dolan noted that it does reduce the bulk of the building by counting space that is less than 7' of head room. Ms. Malich said that there could be a 3500 square foot building with an attic that they could finish off later. Mr. Dolan noted that a 6/12 roof pitch is required. Mr. Allen said he liked the idea that if the space is finished it should be counted.

Ms. Guernsey suggested leaving it at 7' and finished or unfinished since people are going to do what they want after the fact. Mr. Dolan reminded everyone that they are really just talking about the waterfront zones of WM, WR and WC where there are building size limitations. Ms. Kester noted that it had to be more than 24' feet wide with a 6/12 pitch roof to have a room that has more than 7' of head room. She suggested removing the word unfinished since it can't be regulated. Ms. Ninen suggested saying finished or unfinished and everyone agreed. Mr. Pasin said he still didn't understand why it should count. It was decided to change the definition of attic to say finished or unfinished and exclude attics from gross floor area.

Ms. Kester then went over the proposed definition for underground building. She reviewed the question from last meeting asking if the stem wall sticks up 18" and is not totally underground does that count toward gross floor area. Mr. Bower explained that those 18" could be insulation or space between roof and floor and the entire floor could be built entirely underground. He further explained the construction of a stem wall and how the entire lower floor could be below ground. He drew an example and added that the minimum space between the wood and ground is 6".

Mr. Dolan asked about window wells and Mr. Bower explained that a legal basement must have a door or an egress window. Ms. Kester noted that she had added that below grade window wells required for ingress/egress are not included in the calculation of access in the definition of underground building. She also noted that 20' is enough width for fire access but that 24' would meet the parking standards. Mr. Bower noted that it would be better to use the words rescue and escape rather than ingress/egress since those are the words used in the building code.

Mr. Pasin asked if the rest of the Planning Commission felt that if 6" of the underground portion is showing it should be counted. The commission noted that they had initially discussed it having to be completely underground. Ms. Kester noted that there would have to be a limitation on it (i.e. limit it to 6") and asked if there was a number that's

okay. Mr. Pasin asked why, and Ms. Kester explained that we are trying to give an allowance for structures underground and there has to be a definition in order to know what to allow.

Ms. Ninen said that there it is a better utilization of the land when they can build underground. Ms. Kester noted that these definitions will be city wide and can be ratcheted down for the waterfront. Zones B-2, RB-1 and DB are where there are gross floor area limitations along with the waterfront districts. Ms. Malich said that she didn't have a problem excluding underground structures in areas like B-2 and RB-1, but she did have a concern in waterfront zones. Mr. Dolan suggested that they just talk about the areas that are not along the waterfront and look at the waterfront areas when they look at the shoreline issues in 2008. Mr. Dolan said that the current regulations could remain in the waterfront zones. Everyone agreed that that made sense.

Jeane Derebey asked which definition of underground building did everyone prefer, the one which said "entirely underground" or "a portion thereof". Mr. Pasin stated that he didn't feel that entirely underground would allow for underground parking since there are so many properties that have a slope. Mr. Dolan asked Mr. Pasin how much of a structure could be above ground and still not be counted. Mr. Pasin asked how the calculation would be made and Ms. Kester explained how it could be calculated using the topography lines. Ms. Derebey asked if Mr. Pasin was saying that if there was parking underground, no matter what, it shouldn't count and Mr. Pasin said yes. Ms. Kester said that Mr. Pasin is saying that the entire first floor could be parking and not count.

Dick Bower left at 7:15 pm.

Mr. Pasin gave an example of the QFC site and how it could be utilized with underground parking. Ms. Kester went over the history of how the code had read over the last 2 or 2 and half years.

Ms. Malich expressed that she was okay if it's underground and it's parking it shouldn't count but if it's not parking then it should count. Ms. Ninen pointed out that the City Attorney had said that we can't really regulate the use since if it's totally underground what's the difference. She stated that she felt they needed to give the developers a cookie to encourage them to put parking underground, like 30%. Ms. Kester explained how the proposed definition would work and how it would work if they used 50% of the volume.

Mr. Dolan asked for a percentage of the lower floor that needs to be underground in order to be exempt from gross floor area.

Ms. Kester went over the definitions from Bellevue and Seattle. Mr. Pasin said that Bellevue and Seattle are not good examples.

Ms. Ninen noted that it would be very subjective to come up with a percentage that would allow the entire floor to not count.

Ms. Ninen and Ms. Malich expressed that they liked the proposed definition. Ms. Ninen noted that this will not impact current buildings. Ms. Kester added that there is a 65,000 square foot limit in C-1 but that it only applies to commercial/retail not office use.

Mr. Pasin stated that the theatre couldn't build underground parking. Chairman Malich reminded Mr. Pasin that the square foot limitation was not on the table at this time. Mr. Allen expressed that he agreed with the proposed definition. Mr. Pasin said he disagreed.

Ms. Guernsey asked that Ms. Kester write another definition using the 50% calculation as she didn't like either definition.

Ms. Ninen pointed out that this commission speaks for the entire community and that builders are part of the community.

Mr. Pasin expressed his disapproval of the 65,000 square foot limitation and restricting underground buildings.

Ms. Derebey felt that the proposed definition using "entirely" was the best way.

Ms. Kester reminded them that this is going to go to Council before a public hearing so it really is just a suggestion. Ms. Guernsey said that she didn't really think either of the definitions worked and would like to hear from the public.

Four of the six present agreed that the proposed definition worked the best.

Ms. Kester offered to put together a memo to council saying that after much discussion this is what we think is a good start and would like to hold public meetings.

Ms. Guernsey suggested rearranging the definition to make it clearer. Ms. Kester agreed to look at the definition to make it clearer.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

January 3rd, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. – 2008 Work Schedule

Ms. Guernsey stated that she would be late to the January 3rd meeting and Ms. Malich indicated that she might not be able to make it.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Move to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. Pasin/Guernsey – Motion passed unanimously.