

**City of Gig Harbor Planning Commission
Minutes of Work-Study Session
December 6th, 2007
Gig Harbor Civic Center**

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

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Move to table the minutes of November 15th, 2007 until next meeting. Ninen/Malich – 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.

At this meeting the Planning Commission will specifically review:

- An amendment to the gross floor area definition to exclude underground structures
- Current and potential definitions for the term “underground”

Senior Planner Jennifer Kester went over the issues that had been discussed at the last meeting, creating definitions and amending the gross floor area definition to exclude underground structures. She went over the proposed amendment to the definition of gross floor area and noted that she had added a section regarding how gross floor area would be calculated for the purposes of determining off street parking requirements.

Commissioner Harris Atkins suggested that they should understand their goal prior to moving forward. Ms. Kester said she had heard that from the last meeting that the Planning Commission was trying to allow underground structures to not count toward the gross floor area in certain zones. She added that they had talked about modifying the performance standards in WM and not making this change there.

Chairman Theresa Malich noted that residents on the water are counting their tidelands as pervious coverage and therefore can build a larger structure. Ms. Kester noted that the upcoming changes to the Shoreline Master Program might change those things. Mr. Atkins asked if when this comes back will they look at the zones and talk about the

building size. Ms. Kester said yes, and suggested that they think about this as a city wide activity knowing that after the council looks at this further then they will continue discussion. Mr. Allen said that he felt that this should be adopted only in the areas where you want it to apply. Ms. Ninen pointed out that when we look at the sub areas we will look at these particular things. Planning Director Tom Dolan said that they will not be brought to council for adoption until the performance standards have been worked on also. Additionally, it was noted by Ms. Kester that there are only a few zones that have gross floor area limitations.

Commissioner Jeane Derebey said she wasn't sure she liked the wording about unfinished attics regardless of headroom not being counted. Mr. Atkins proposed removing the word attic and the reference to headroom and let the building code regulate that. Ms. Kester further explained the regulations regarding the building code. She made a note to include habitable attic space.

Mr. Atkins asked about the definition where it says that gross floor area includes basement. He suggested that it be included unless it's underground. Ms. Kester suggested that they revisit this topic when they have the definition of underground nailed down. It was decided to make the definition consistent with the building code to assure there are no loop holes. Mr. Atkins further suggested removing "from the centerlines of division walls"; he thought perhaps it should say "common walls". Dick Allen asked what was meant by penthouse floors. Ms. Kester explained that refers to large mechanical equipment rooms on the top of buildings.

Ms. Kester illustrated a possible scenario and asked what portions would have to be underground to meet the definition. Mr. Atkins explained the method used by Mercer Island. Ms. Kester went over other possible scenarios. Ms. Derebey said she was in favor of being straight forward and if any of it was seen then it's not underground. Ms. Ninen pointed out that the issue with garages is that there has to be an access. Ms. Kester said that in Seattle they have a limitation on how big the access can be.

Mr. Allen asked if the issue of finish grade would cause people to severely alter the grade to accomplish this and Ms. Kester noted that they must respect natural topography. She continued by explaining the Design Manual requirement and that height is measured from original grade.

Randy Boss asked how the access would be handled if it wasn't visible and if these standards would apply to residential versus commercial. Ms. Kester explained that these would be city wide definitions and the performance standards would be looked at in each zone.

There was further discussion on the limitation of the access, limiting the width and the number of access points. Ms. Derebey suggested limiting the access to a total number no matter the number (i.e. 24' total exposed access) of access points. Mr. Allen asked what the standard driveway width was and Ms. Kester said that she would consult with the Engineering Division on these widths. Mr. Atkins said he liked referencing existing

grade. Ms. Derebey said she like using natural grade. Mr. Atkins asked why not say natural or finished whichever is lower, everyone agreed. It was decided that the definition should be for underground buildings.

Jim Pasin arrived at 6:50.

Commissioner Pasin asked if it was realistic to say that it had to be entirely underground. Ms. Derebey said yes, and that they can have it partially exposed but it would have to be counted toward their gross floor area. Ms. Kester pointed out that it had been discussed before Mr. Pasin arrived. Mr. Dolan said that it was acknowledged that it may limit how often an underground structure could work. Additionally, Ms. Kester explained that there could be areas that will count towards the gross floor area and portions that won't. Mr. Pasin said that he didn't feel that this definition bought much. Ms. Malich said that wanted to listen to public input. Ms. Kester pointed out that this definition did speak to the concerns raised by the City Attorney.

Ms. Kester then went back to the basement issue now that they had defined underground. Mr. Atkins noted that underground buildings and basement could be the same or different and asked about entirely below ground and whether that would allow a window. Ms. Kester said that she hadn't intended that. Mr. Atkins asked why use the word basement and Ms. Kester said she would search the code for the word basement.

Theresa called a 2 minute recess and the meeting was reconvened at 7:04 pm.

Ms. Kester said that basement is used to define story but is not used on its own. She noted that it isn't considered a story if it's below grade.

It was decided to remove "basement" from the definition of gross floor area. Ms. Derebey asked who was proposing the removal of basement and asked for a further explanation. Mr. Atkins explained that it seemed confusing to reference basement and underground. Ms. Kester said that she wanted to think about this further.

Mr. Pasin drew an example of a building with two feet of exposed foundation for basement space and Ms. Kester said that it would count toward gross floor area. Everyone agreed that it may be a problem since you can't have wood touching the ground. Ms. Kester said that she would talk with the building official and maybe it could be limited to 18" or 2'. Ms. Derebey pointed out that if they didn't say basements count people are going to think that basements don't count. Ms. Derebey suggested that perhaps the Building Official Dick Bower could come to the next meeting. Ms. Kester illustrated how the definition could be interpreted. Discussion followed on what a portion thereof meant to everyone and Ms. Derebey said that she thought it meant the portion of a building. Ms. Ninen said that she believed that the portion of the story could be excluded. Ms. Malich said that she thought that given all the grades around here that may be too restrictive. Mr. Pasin drew an example where the grade goes in both directions. Mr. Dolan said that he was confident that it could be calculated either way and then require the surveyor to show the area that is underground.

Mr. Pasin asked what they were trying to restrict and Mr. Atkins replied that they were trying to provide a benefit that would be easy to manage and predictable. Ms. Derebey said that she recalled that the City Council was most concerned with defining underground.

Everyone agreed that it needed more thought. Mr. Allen asked about the moving of large amounts of dirt and Mr. Dolan replied that it had been agreed that it could be natural or finished whichever is lower.

Ms. Malich asked if there was anything else on floor area, there was nothing more. Ms. Kester said that at the next meeting they would talk about these issues more and also further discuss parking. She asked that at the next meeting they wrap it up so that she can get a memo to council for more direction.

2. Discussion of potential 2008 Comprehensive Plan amendments to be proposed by the Planning Commission.

Harris Atkins referenced the Comprehensive Plan sections 2.82 and 2.8, the Land Use section. He stated that it talks about the land use map and says maintain a coded map overlay which designates the future planned state of the planning area. He noted that when you look at the land use map there are several areas that don't correspond to the zoning. Specifically he mentioned an area off Soundview near Spinnaker Ridge where he didn't think the city would want that designated medium density when the surrounding area is low density. He went on to say that the other area is around the historic downtown and the land use map says the preferred density is residential low and it is zoned multi-family. He expressed that it seemed like the city ought to be encouraging more density around that downtown area. Mr. Atkins stated that he would like to see the comp plan map updated to make them consistent. Ms. Kester said that it could be done within the view basin plan but that wouldn't necessarily cover all the areas, so if the Planning Commission wanted to make a recommendation staff will take it to Council. She asked if they wanted to do it for all the areas that are inconsistent and they agreed it should be for all the inconsistencies. Mr. Pasin noted that they had to be sure that they are not doing something backwards (i.e. changing the comp plan map to reflect zoning). Mr. Atkins agreed. Ms. Kester noted that the first quarter was a pretty aggressive schedule. She also pointed out that anything that would be made a higher land use designation would run into a problem because of the lack of sewer capacity. Mr. Derebey said that they just have to start by identifying them and go from there.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

December 20th, 2007 at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Move to adjourn at 7:40 p.m. Derebey/Ninen – Motion passed unanimously.