

**City of Gig Harbor Planning Commission and Design Review Board**  
**Minutes of Joint Work-Study Session**  
**April 5th, 2007**  
**Gig Harbor Civic Center**

**PRESENT:** Commissioners Jim Pasin, Joyce Ninen, Dick Allen, Theresa Malich, Jill Guernsey, Harris Atkins and Jeane Derebey. Board members John Jernejcic and Charles Carlson were present. Staff present: Jennifer Kester, Cliff Johnson and Diane Gagnon. Kurt Latimore from the Latimore Company was also present.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 5:30 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**MOTION:** Move to approve the minutes of March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007 as written.  
Pasin/Guernsey – Motion passed unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Design Review Process Improvements – Batch 1b** – Discussion of the second batch of proposed amendments in Phase 1.

Senior Planner Jennifer Kester went over Phase 1b and the timing of current process of Design Review. She introduced Kurt Latimore and he went over the constraints of Design Review

Mr. Latimore went over the objectives of predictability, efficiency, collaboration and timeliness and the importance of these objectives to the applicants. He noted that there will be three main ground rules as we look at alternatives to improve the design review process.

- Progressive review that aligns with the natural sequence of a project
- One open record hearing is all that is allowed
- Quality development

Mr. Latimore then went over the various points on the board.

Phasing of the changes

1. Process
  - a. Sorting of overlaps – done
  - b. Timing of decision making– where we are now
  - c. Clarification
2. Applicability  
Comp plan  
Sub areas -
  - Historic
  - View Basin

GH North  
Westside  
Employment

Thresholds -

DRB Lite  
Exceptions  
Mandatory

Typologies –

Single Family  
Multi-family  
Subdivisions  
Non-residential  
Transitions

3. Implementing text amendments
4. Sub Area Plan

Discussion was held on mandatory review and the City Attorney's position that mandatory design review may violate the one open record public meetings act. Jim Pasin stated that he felt that mandatory design review didn't necessarily achieve the objectives and Ms. Kester stated that perhaps it achieves quality development although not necessarily quicker.

Jim Pasin voiced concern that there are elements in Design Review that he didn't feel mattered or made good sense. Ms. Kester stated that they will have to discuss that during the applicability phase. Harris Atkins stated that he was concerned that some of what was being done was apologizing for having Design Review and emphasized the need to maintain the character of Gig Harbor. He noted that the objectives listed were more methods of how the product is achieved.

Ms. Kester noted that whether you call them ground rules or objectives, quality development is the most important thing. Theresa Malich asked if there will be an open forum to have discussions about what people want to see and Ms. Kester said that we will be holding many public meetings and will try to promote them as much as possible.

Mr. Pasin asked about the possibility of changes happening at the state level to the regulation requiring only one open record hearing. Mr. Latimore spoke about phasing of a project and that there are ways to have several hearings on one project. Mr. Latimore spoke about the other cities he had worked for that have Design Review and the noticeable difference between projects that go through Design Review and those that don't. He also noted that in other cities they have sub areas that only review certain typologies and certain categories have mandatory review. He continued by saying that they may not strictly comply with the open record public hearings act; however, there is a prevailing practice out there. Discussion continued on other cities. Ms. Kester talked about the Seattle process and Mr. Atkins said he had looked into it also and was very impressed with their website and what he had learned about their process.

Chuck Carlson stated that he felt that a project as large as Uptown should not be able to obtain approval without going to the Design Review Board.

Jill Guernsey asked for something in writing from City Attorney Carol Morris regarding why the mandatory DRB process would violate the open public meetings act but the optional DRB meeting would not.

Kurt Latimore then went over more specifics of the Phase 1b proposed changes. He explained that right now we are talking about our current standards and the timing of how they are processed. Everyone was given a flow chart of the proposed timing and concurrent processes.

Jill Guernsey brought up whether some things should be earlier or later in the process and in moving some earlier will that only create more problems. She asked the DRB members if making the decision sooner would be better. Charles Carlson answered that when they see projects at the end the developer has invested in his design and is reluctant to change anything so seeing it earlier would be better. Jim Pasin answered that the key is to review the topography and retaining walls early and review the details of lighting, color, etc. later in the process.

Harris Atkins asked why the current DRB pre-application process was not working and Ms. Kester replied that she felt that it was perhaps because applicants are not required to have a pre-application and it is non-binding.

Ms. Kester spoke about the draw back of moving some issues earlier in the process, stating that it may create a situation where the DRB recommends something that then has to be changed in the civil review process. She gave examples of how some recommendations by the board would have to be changed due to environmental or other regulations. Mr. Latimore continued with the explanation of the proposed changes to design review timing.

Ms. Kester talked about what was needed from the group tonight, stating that staff needed to know that this was a good direction to go so that language could be written. She talked about the need to define what the design schematic review would be and what perhaps the requirements for submittal could be. She stated that staff will be holding a meeting with developers to help develop the list of what could be considered complete at different stages in the process.

Mr. Pasin talked about the various pre-applications the DRB has had and that the applicant was happy with the process and that the end result was improved. Commissioner Atkins asked about predictability. Kurt Latimore explained that this proposal would be a binding recommendation.

Discussion was then held on moving the smaller details to the building permit stage and the idea of DRB Lite which would allow for small modifications approved by the Planning Director. Charles Carlson mentioned that he did not see any reason for lighting standards to come before the DRB at all and Ms. Kester said that it may be something that could be changed in Phase 2.

Mr. Latimore explained that the DRB Lite process could also apply to issues where there are small deviations to a design standard. Ms. Kester clarified that there are two elements to DRB Lite. Joyce Ninen asked if the process reflected the one in Redmond and Mr. Latimore said that a portion of this proposal did reflect that.

John Jernejcic said that he felt that the DRB Lite concept was a great idea and looking at it visually really helped. He asked if there will be more specific decisions made about what constitutes DRB Lite. Ms. Kester said that she would bring some proposed language to the next meeting to begin the discussion.

Charles Carlson said that he felt that this may result in the DRB seeing more projects twice but that things would be smoother.

Chairman Theresa Malich called a five minutes recess at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 7:40 p.m.

Commissioner Atkins asked about the concept of the DRB pre-app and would that still be possible. Ms. Kester said that if this process was adopted there would be two things that would need to be addressed and she stated that a DRB pre-app would that still be offered. Everyone felt that once they decided on the list of requirements for a DRB schematic they would decide if the pre-app is still needed. Ms. Kester then talked about preliminary applications to the DRB and whether those would still be offered. She stated that it seemed that the process would no longer be necessary once the levels of submittal were more appropriate. Jill Guernsey said that she didn't think there needed to be three different ways to go through the DRB.

Commissioner Pasin said that he would still like to offer pre-apps in order to encourage designs that are outside the box. John Jernejcic agreed. Mr. Jernejcic said that one of the comments the DRB had received was that the process tends to make all of Gig Harbor look the same and he felt that they should encourage people to bring new and different designs. Commissioner Ninen said that she felt that when more options were offered to assist an applicant it promoted collaboration.

Discussion was held on the idea that some DRB Lite decisions which modified DRB recommendations would possibly need to be sent out to the Hearing Examiner and the DRB. Commissioner Atkins said he would like to see what kinds of things would fall within the DRB Lite process. Everyone wanted to see language and more examples.

They then discussed the timing of clearing and grading and it's relationship to the process.

Ms. Kester explained that at the next meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> there will be another work study session on this issue and she would have text for them to review. She stated that a public hearing will be scheduled for the first meeting in May in order to get public input early in the process. She also noted that there was a possibility that there will be a presentation by some local architects on underground garages. It was decided that the presentation would be the last meeting in May. Discussion will be held on Phase 1c being discussed at that meeting as well. It was decided that staff would ask the City Attorney about advertising it as a public hearing when there is a presentation. Ms. Kester also reminded everyone that there will be a joint City Council/Planning Commission/Design Review Board meeting on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

## **ADJOURN**

**MOTION:** Move to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. Guernsey/Derebey – motion passed.