

CITY OF COVINGTON
Planning Commission Minutes

April 5, 2012

City Hall Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Key called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chair Daniel Key, Vice Chair Paul Max, Sonia Foss, Ed Holmes, Bill Judd, Sean Smith and Alex White.

MEMBERS ABSENT - NONE

STAFF PRESENT

Richard Hart, Community Development Director
Ann Mueller, Senior Planner
Kelly Thompson, Planning Commission Secretary

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- **1. Vice Chair Max moved and Commissioner White seconded to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried 7-0.**

CITIZEN COMMENTS – NONE

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Public Hearing & Recommendation on 2012 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Docket

Chair Key opened the public hearing.

Community Development Director, Richard Hart began the hearing by explaining the process of recommending the 2012 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Docket. The purpose of the public hearing is to determine if the proposed amendments for the dockets should be recommended to the City Council by the Planning Commission. Once the docket has been approved by the City Council, the Planning Commission will then discuss the merits of each of the items on the docket.

Two of the proposed amendments related to ground floor retail in the Town Center (TC) in mixed use multi-story developments came from the Planning

Commission. This is change from four years ago. They include CPA 2012-01 and RA 2012-01.

The third amendment is related to annexation policies in the Comprehensive Plan that are in need of updating. With the potential annexation of the Northern Gateway, the City wants to make sure we have good annexation policies to follow. CPA 2012-02 was submitted by the Community Development staff.

Tonight is the public hearing, discussion and recommendation to the City Council for setting the final docket.

Kim Nakamura, CEO of Rush Forth Construction Company, is working with Ashton Development looking at properties and how to develop them. They have extensive experience in development opportunities and they have experienced these restrictions (related to requiring ground floor retail in mixed use multi-story developments in the TC zone). They have found the more restrictions on the property, the longer it takes to develop. He defines a successful project as one that gets constructed and is profitable.

Eric Cederstrand, President of Commencement Bay Development, has worked on numerous projects in Seattle, Bellevue, Tacoma, University Place and other cities that have gone through similar growth. He defines a successful project as one that does not go back to the bank. Lenders are shying away from mixed-use development. Parking is one of the biggest challenges that they face. An attractive building can be built that does not necessarily contain ground floor retail. Tenant Improvements can cost \$60-\$100 per square foot to finish, which many tenants can't afford so it falls to the landlord or property owner. Filling up stores not on main arterials are not as successful. He believes that the City needs to be responsive to the market needs.

Jim Wene, Ashton Development, would like to piggyback on what Mr. Cederstrand stated with regard to market demand. Tenants need signage, visibility and access. There has been little demand and it is difficult to fill those second tier interior spaces. Mr. Wene also submitted letters to the Planning Commission.

Doug Mergenthaler, Ashton Development indicated his concern is for the tenants who are working and struggling just to maintain their businesses. Every time a new business is brought in, another is forced out. These small business tenant spaces are difficult to fill. When there is a constant turn over, that is not good for the city. He objects to requiring ground floor retail in mixed-use development in the Town Center and plans to speak before the City Council as well.

Mr. Hart reminded the Commission that we are not discussing the merits of the proposed docket amendments at this time.

Chair Key closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Smith asked why the requirement for mixed-use development in the Town Center zone was removed from the Comprehensive Plan?

Mr. Hart offered that four years ago when the City Council did the downtown study, the consultant recommended that ground floor retail be a requirement on the two main north-south streets. The Council decided to remove the requirement at that time.

Commissioner Holmes shared his opinion that the downtown is intended to have retail. Having this come before the City Council for discussion will clarify this issue.

Vice Chair Max agrees with Commissioner Holmes that there are legitimate concerns. We are not discussing the merits today, but if it is on the docket, we can talk about whether or not this proposed amendment has merit.

Commissioner Judd agrees it has merits for further review.

- **Commissioner Smith moved and Vice Chair Max seconded to recommend for adoption the 2012 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Docket to the City Council as presented in the staff memo. Motion passed 7-0.**

NEW BUSINESS - NONE

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

ATTENDANCE VOTE – NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT- NONE

COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM STAFF

Ms. Mueller has made some changes to the Wireless Communication Facility Code and will be bringing those to the Planning Commission for discussion. On April 11, 2012, there is a Home Owner's Association and Citizen meeting with Community Development Director, Richard Hart, Code Enforcement Officer, Brian Bykonen, Building Official, Robert Meyers and Police Chief Kevin Klason.

Mr. Hart talked about offering these Home Owner Association meetings once a year to see what kind of interest there is. The meeting will be held in the Council Chambers beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Mueller informed the Planning Commission that lapel pins for the 35th anniversary of the Aquatic Center are available.

Mr. Hart provided a brochure to the Planning Commission regarding SEATS transportation priority needs. There is some good information that the community has identified as a priority.

Mr. Hart also provided an updated Planning Commission meeting schedule. The next regular Planning Commission meeting will be held on May 3, 2012. With regard to the Multi-family tax exemption, the City Council asked if staff could go back and consider adding condominiums by the end of the year.

The consultants that responded to the request for proposal (RFP) for the Northern Gateway Study have been interviewed. The decision was made to hire Stalzer and Associates. The consultant hopes to be underway by the last week of April. The cost of the study will be paid by private property owners, and there are no city dollars funding the study. Once the study is underway and the City is provided a scope of work, we will keep the Planning Commission in the loop.

Commissioner Foss asked if cost was considered when proposing the option of telescoping poles for ham radio towers. She felt it was good to hear the concerns of landowners and developers at the public hearing earlier in the evening.

Vice Chair Max thanked the public for providing comments on the proposed Comprehensive Plan Docket Amendments.

Commissioner Smith gave a brief update on the Budget Priorities Advisory Committee (BPAC) and encourages anyone interested to come to the meetings.

ADJOURN

The April 5, 2012 Planning Commission Meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly Thompson, Planning Commission Secretary

