

**CITY OF COVINGTON
Planning Commission Minutes**

June 7, 2012

City Hall Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Key called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Sean Smith

STAFF PRESENT

Richard Hart, Community Development Director
Salina Lyons, 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 and the minutes for May 3, 2012. Motion carried 6-0.**

CITIZEN COMMENTS – NONE

PUBLIC HEARING - NONE

NEW BUSINESS - NONE

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Community Development Director, Richard Hart introduced a memo outlining the two Comprehensive Plan Amendments and one Development Regulation Amendment Docket. Staff wanted to make sure the Planning Commission had the opportunity to discuss any comments made at the public hearing from April 5, 2012.

Chair Key opened the discussion to questions and feedback from the Commissioners.

Mr. Hart provided some background on the process of developing the Downtown Plan in 2009 for the benefit of Planning Commissioners who have not served during the entire process. There was a six month public participation process that included mailings, outreach and public forums. After public input, 4 conceptual options were presented by the City's consultant. The option selected from final report was what the consultant recommended and staff and the majority of the public wanted.

Mr. Hart gave the Planning Commission some history regarding big box retail in the downtown area. Ashton Development requested that the zoning district regulations be amended to remove the requirement of mandatory mixed-use developments with ground floor retail in the Town Center zone. The City Council amended zoning district regulations from what had been recommended in the plan and big box retail was limited to the western portion of the downtown zone. The property was later sold to Valley Medical which is currently being developed as an Urgent Care facility.

Commissioner Holmes asked about the verbiage of single use vs. multi-use and observed that the time period of "interim" is undefined.

Mr. Hart explained that the intent of the City Council was to wait a few years and reevaluate the zoning regulations before revisiting the vision.

Commissioner Holmes shared his concern that the recent testimony was negative regarding the multi-use and asked why the testimony was in such conflict with the zoning regulations.

Mr. Hart responded that the property owner stands to maximize profits on the land when there are less restrictions placed on the property. That is one view point from an individual who wants to maximize the use and the value of that property. There are other large property owners in the downtown who have not expressed strong opposition to the mixed use requirement.

Mr. Hart noted several other successful examples of mixed-use buildings in Mercer Island, Kirkland, Mill Creek, Auburn and Renton (the Landing). There is no denying there have been difficulties with new mixed-use developments given the economic downturn. Mountlake Terrace just built a new transit center and approved a ground floor retail/residential mixed-use building with underground parking which also utilized the multifamily tax exemptions. Several of the cities who have had success are near a major interstate. There is a greater long term tax and economic benefits of a mixed-use development.

If the City can incentivize multi-story mixed-use development with ground floor retail, development could occur more quickly and more successfully if it is a

public-private partnership. There are a number of things the public can come to the table with, for example: infrastructure improvements, land, parking, etc. The City does not currently have the funds to do this, but we are working on ways to raise these types of funds to implement this long-term vision in the town center, even with its limitations.

Commissioner White pointed out that the plan is a long-term vision, and if it doesn't occur right now, it will happen eventually.

Commissioner Foss doesn't like to see development turned away right now, but realizes that to achieve the long-term vision, it may not happen right away.

Commissioner Judd stated that he trusts in the work that went into the process of developing the downtown vision and zoning standards. A bit of short-term sacrifice is worth achieving the long-term vision. One of the complaints he has heard from the public is that the City has been inconsistent, and rules have changed many times over the years. This is an exercise in consistency. We don't want to panic that development isn't occurring as quickly as we want it to. It takes more vision and leadership to stay with the plan.

Chair Key stated that he doesn't hear people clamoring for another apartment building. He hears that the public wants more retail options and a town center plaza.

Related to the Comprehensive Plan criteria for annexing unincorporated areas, Mr. Hart has been in contact with King County's Planning Department. Staff prepared a SEPA application for the non-project action. The County called and asked some questions. Mr. Hart explained that we would appreciate and requested King County's review of the annexation policies prior to the July public hearing.

ATTENDANCE VOTE

- **Commissioner Foss moved and Commissioner White seconded to excuse Commissioner Smith. Carried 6-0.**

PUBLIC COMMENT- NONE

COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM STAFF

Ms. Lyons shared that a six lot subdivision, Woodbridge, was issued the Notice to Proceed a couple of weeks ago. Staff anticipates Covington Professional Arts medical building will be submitting for building permits in the near future.

Chair Key asked about the status of Soos Creek Business Park. Ms. Lyons explained that the site development application is due to expire but they can apply for a two year extension. This site is 100% dependent on the new lift station for sewer service.

Ms. Lyons also talked about the future alignment of the street regarding the Covington Professional Arts Building.

There is recently passed legislation for approving extensions of plats for up to 7 years. Plats are now approved for 7 years from the vested date. Projects vested prior to 2007 will receive 9 years.

Mr. Hart shared that Community Development gave a presentation to Budget Priorities Advisory Committee (BPAC) in June. He will share the PowerPoint presentation via e-mail with the Planning Commission. Mr. Hart shared some statistics on Business Licenses and Home Occupations and noted that analysis of potential park impact fees are being presented to the City Council. The recent open house for the Northern Gateway study was well attended.

ADJOURN

The June 7, 2012 Planning Commission Meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly Thompson, Planning Commission Secretary