

Minutes

City of Molalla **Planning Department**

May 28, 2009

Call to Order

Chairperson Dick Miller called the meeting to order of the Planning Commission at 6:30pm on May 28, 2009 at the Molalla City Hall Meeting Room. This is a continuation of hearings before the Planning Commission on the Comprehensive Plan, Code, Downtown & OR 211 Streetscape Master Plan, Parks & Recreation Master Plan, and URA designation. This meeting focused on staff reports based off of comments made on the record.

Flag Salute

Roll Call

Planning Commissioners:

Chairperson Dick Miller, Secretary Michelle Mills, Commissioner Bob Trexler, Commissioner Joe Greenman, Commissioner Bill Hood, and Commissioner Jerome Beattie

Absent

Vice Chairperson Harry Ruth, Commissioner Christine Dublin, and Commissioner Tara Kramer

Staff

Shane Potter Planning Director

Planning Director Potter informed the Planning Commission of the official change that has occurred on the Planning Commission. Due to health problems Christine Dublin has been given a leave of absence and was approved by City Council to be moved to a non-voting member while Jerome Beattie will be moved to a voting member spot.

Approval of Prior Minutes

The Planning Commission approved the minutes of April 28, 2009 and May 12, 2009.

Public Comment

No Public Comments

Public Hearing

Chairperson Miller explained the purpose of the meeting and the procedures that will be used to conduct the hearing. Mr. Miller explained the procedures for submitting oral arguments for the record.

Planning Director Potter briefly discussed the staff report on the E.D. Hovee Memo from January 1, 2006.

Planning Director Potter then provided an overview of the DLCD letter from September 29, 2008 highlighting those areas that were not discussed in previous staff reports on previous letters from the state.

Planning Director Potter then addressed the 1964 Comprehensive Plan for Molalla.

Secretary Mills asked what the population of Molalla was in 1980.

Mr. Potter stated that he did not have this information but would obtain it for them and provide it at a future hearing.

Secretary Mills explained that she is surprised that there was such a desire to move the Buckeroo out of the downtown and still much of that land has not developed.

Planning Director Potter stated that the 1964 plan goes on to talk about getting truck traffic out of the downtown which is a problem we have today. Mr. Potter continued with the overview stating that the plan made it clear if downtown did not clean up then the downtown would eventually end up having competition with commercial moving outside of the downtown.

Planning Director Potter stated that he brings this plan up because the Planning Commission has made it clear that they did not want to do all the work on these plans unless they would be enforced. Mr. Potter continued by stating that had the 1964 plan been enforced then much of the problems we face today would not exist at the level they exist at.

Planning Director Potter concluded his reports and wanted to address old issues that had been brought up. Mr. Potter began by discussing a letter from TEAM and how they feel we should allow auto dealers in the downtown due to the economic conditions we are currently in.

Chairperson Miller stated that both of the existing auto dealers would be grandfathered and did they take that into consideration knowing that they would not be changed as a result of this code.

Planning Director Potter stated that he felt they probably were concerned about the loss of the auto industry today and that one or both of the properties may be vacant now or in the near future and would be vacant for more than 12 months disqualifying them from a non-conforming use status.

Chairperson Miller then stated that we are trying to address many of the issues in the downtown such as the old lumberyard (Floragon site). He continued by stating that the Planning Commission has discussed everything from mixed use commercial/residential uses to an employment zone and are waiting to see what the health of the land is in order to proceed.

Secretary Mills stated that this is a difficult decision but an empty car lot is a very bad image for downtown because of the appearance.

Chairperson Miller asked what the last sentence in the TEAM letter was asking when they state: "and as Molalla recovers from the economic crisis, and has the opportunity to capture business growth these uses can be re-established or re-addressed at a later time".

Planning Director Potter stated that he feels they are stating that while they understand these are not the best uses for downtown now is not the time to take away any opportunities. Secretary Mills expressed that she felt the auto industry will take longer to recover than the rest of the economy so do we see an end in sight where we could come back and restrict such uses.

Mr. Potter stated this is what happened in the 1964 plan ideas for betterment in the long run came up and officials decided to hold off on many of the implementations resulting in many unresolved issues still today.

Planning Director Potter explained the three options he has heard on this process so far:

1. Do not allow auto dealerships in the downtown.
2. Allow auto dealerships but make them a conditional use with restrictions such as no outside storage of vehicles.
3. Allow auto dealers to continue on as they have thus far.

Commissioner Greenman added that he felt there would be problems achieving the downtown transformation if we continue to allow these types of uses.

Dianna Nartker, 23698 Beattie Dr. - expressed that she was concerned with removing these types of uses where would we put them.

Planning Director Potter explained that the uses would not be removed they would continue on as conditional uses. However Mr. Potter explained as they lost their non-conforming uses (due to inactivity of 12 consecutive months) that they would not be able to relocate. There would be additional room in the C-2 zone to house these types of uses.

Commissioner Greenman asked if dealerships own compared to leasing.

Planning Director Potter stated that he felt they probably do but does not know that for sure.

Mr. Greenman continued by stating that when downtown develops correctly the value of the land will push the dealers to want to move the land outside of the downtown.

Mr. Potter explained that the ultimate goal of the Planning Commission was to make downtown a walkable community. The Planning Commission is also in charge of finding the best uses of land and how they can be used. The ultimate goal is to see a vibrant area with increased value of downtown helping not only the businesses but the city and its citizens through increased tax revenue.

Commissioner Greenman asked if a new dealer came in to take over the dealership under a non-conforming use could they continue the use.

Planning Director Potter stated that they would be able to continue as long as it was not more than 12 consecutive months.

Planning Director Potter explained that it is very hard for people to envision 20 years into the future.

Commissioner Greenman stated that it was easy to look at the 1964 plan and see what the vision was and how it failed to be carried out. He explained that the plan existed but the implementation and enforcement was not and therefore we did not see the beneficial changes that could have come.

Planning Director Potter explained that he concurs and it shows that planning is critical for a community to move forward.

Commissioner Greenman states that the TEAM letter does not express the intensity of this concern.

Planning Director Potter explained that he feels they have more pressing concerns that this right now.

Roger Gates, 819 N Molalla Avenue - What about feed store, welding shop and those types of uses which can be an eyesore for a community.

Chairperson Miller explained that he felt as time goes on we will see the uses conform more around the pedestrian element if we ensure that the plan is carried out.

Commissioner Greenman explained that he feels the cost of the land that will occur over time will do away with these types of uses because of the uses.

Secretary Mills explained that the uses mentioned would also seem to move as a result of change that will occur with the downtown by pressure for beautification.

Planning Director Potter stated that over the past ten years the city has seen a more than doubling (195 million in 2000 - 405 million in 2008) in valuation of the city. This is not just due to residential it is also about the improvements made in commercial and industrial.

Mr. Gates stated that he felt auto dealerships were being singled out.

Planning Director Potter stated that this definitely is not the case. He stated that the Planning Commission addressed drive through at the last meeting. He also addressed that we need to discuss gas and automotive repair as part of tonight's discussion.

Mr. Gates stated we need to get the bypass done to push these types of uses outside of the downtown.

Commissioner Greenman agreed with this. He stated that the plan is an overall guide not a guarantee. We identify the need for a bypass but when will it be possible because of money. That is a question none of us know when and how that will occur. we can make the best guestimate available to us but there are no guarantees.

Planning Director Potter then began discussion on gas stations and drive through.

Chairperson Miller along with the rest of the Planning Commission requested that Planning Director Potter write up the pro's and con's of these uses along with the auto dealerships.

Roger Gates - 819 N Molalla Avenue requested that staff point out where the downtown area are.

Planning Director Potter pointed this location out.

Planning Director Potter then provided an overview of a letter from the Portland Metro Association of Realtors.

General discussion took place with regards to this issue and will be further detailed and a staff report in the near future before the Planning Commission.

Planning Director Potter also covered the CPO letter and asked if there were any more questions regarding the letter.

Commissioner Joe Greenman stated that some of the issues raised in the letter such as shade trees and the such have been implemented into the plan. Water is a necessary element however it is not at this time that we have to prepare our water plans. Also it appears as if they are trying to address our water needs over the next 50 years when we actually need to address the 20 year period.

Chairperson Miller explained that much of this letter seems to point back to doing nothing with growth.

Mr. Potter stated that this has been made pretty clear by the CPO. However he encourages the CPO to look at what we have done to protect and enhance the city as it develops over the next 20 and 50 years.

Staff Comments

Planning Director Potter stated that people need to remember this process takes time as it involves a great deal of Molalla's future and it should be remembered that the purpose of review is to find things that we all might have overlooked.

Planning Commission Comments

No additional commission comments were made.

Upcoming Meetings

The next hearing will be held on Tuesday June 16, 2009 at 6:30pm at City Hall.

Close Public Hearing

Secretary Mills voted to close the public hearing, Commissioner Beattie seconded all Planning Commission members presented voted to close the public hearing at 8:20pm.

New Business

Planning Director Potter updated the Planning Commission on recent TEAM activities one of which included hiring a downtown manager and the other was narrowing down the list of concerned issues for the Code and having a professional review against other communities. Planning Commission members were excited to hear that there would be supporting documents forwarded to them for the recommendations from TEAM.

Planning Director Potter updated the Planning Commission that Mary Robertson was not able to contact owners until the 20th, for the Yard of the Month. The picture was just published in the paper last Wednesday.

Reminded the Planning Commission of the joint work session on Tuesday June 2, 2009.

Adjournment

Chairperson Miller adjourned the meeting at 8:30pm.

An audio recording of this hearing is on file at City Hall.