

CITY OF SHORELINE
SHORELINE CITY COUNCIL
SUMMARY MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

Monday, April 12, 2004
6:00 p.m.

Shoreline Conference Center
Highlander Room

PRESENT: Mayor Hansen, Councilmembers Chang, Fimia, Grace, and Ransom

ABSENT: Deputy Mayor Jepsen and Councilmember Gustafson

Mayor Hansen convened the interviews for the Planning Commission at 6:11 p.m. The interviews were structured so that each candidate could present an opening statement of three minutes; each Councilmember would ask the same question of all candidates (to be answered in three minutes); and the remaining time could be used for questions of the Council and closing comments.

Ginger Botham

Ms. Botham began by saying it is not fair to judge people by their two or three minute comments at public meetings. She provided her family's background in the building trades and said that her early employment gave her a taste for reading technical papers. She said she and her husband were involved in the arts and sports until she started educating herself about the Comprehensive Plan and zoning in 1998.

Responding to Councilmember Chang's question about how Ms. Botham would work and communicate with the other Planning Commissioners, she said that the Planning Commission needs a balance of people representing many areas, including development, law, building, and ordinary citizens. She said she would represent the "ordinary citizen" of the group because of her activity in the community.

Responding to Councilmember Grace's question about whether any changes are needed to the Planning Commission public input process, Ms. Botham said that all Planning Commissioners should receive City Council packets. She said public input should not be restricted to a certain number of people or minutes per side. She also recommended that written comments be submitted to the Commission and Council in full rather than summarized in a matrix; otherwise citizens feel insulted that their complex comments are not presented adequately.

Responding to Mayor Hansen's question about what unique strength she would bring to the Planning Commission, Ms. Botham said she has been a part of the public process for a long time, and she knows how the pieces fit together. She said it is important "to listen to the silences." She wanted to ensure that things did not change without direction to change. She said she is aware of where the problems are and can ask questions to ensure

the information given to the Council is accurate. She emphasized the importance of the Planning Commission, noting that Tukwila's City Council handles planning commission responsibilities.

Responding to Councilmember Fimia's question about how to improve relations between neighborhoods and developers in balancing the need for growth with the need for stability, Ms. Botham emphasized the importance of early meetings between the two. She said people must be allowed to influence the design before the developer has too much money invested in it. If the developer finds out what the neighbors want early enough, then a cooperative approach can be taken.

Responding to Councilmember Ransom's question about how the Planning Commission could be improved or whether there is an area that is not currently being covered, Ms. Botham said she feels what the Planning Commission is dealing with is appropriate. This is particularly true now that the Hearing Examiner handles appeals of technical aspects of the Code, an idea that she put forward several years ago. She felt the Planning Commission should be involved in all the "big picture" issues, such as the Aurora Corridor project.

Ms. Botham asked when the decision will be made about the appointments and was told it is on next week's agenda. She closed by emphasizing her participation in the public process of planning since 1998 and her skill at reading documents critically. She said when she has a question about a proposal, she consults with the Municipal Research and Services Center and goes online to determine what other cities do. She said Shoreline is in the mainstream at the current time and she felt that it where it should be.

Michael Broili

Mr. Broili emphasized his extensive background in the construction trades and project management. He said he is interested in sustainable development and now wants to give back to his City. He said he wants Shoreline to be a leader, not a follower.

Responding to Councilmember Chang about how he would work with other Planning Commissioners, he outlined his experience working and communicating on various boards and advisory groups. He stressed the importance of listening to others and looking for compromises. He said solutions should try to include everyone's needs.

Responding to Councilmember Grace about what could be done to improve the public input process, Mr. Broili said he felt the Council of Neighborhoods is not being used as fully as it might be. He also suggested more town meetings and perhaps a citizen's academy run by the neighborhood councils but with seed money from the City. He said the Planning Commission meetings should be publicized on Channel 21 and perhaps even televised.

Responding to Mayor Hansen, Mr. Broili said his unique strength is knowledge of low impact development and sustainable design, which reduces the impacts on the

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environment and uses more permeable surfaces. He said he also has expertise in an integrated approach to storm water management.

Responding to Councilmember Fimia, he said it is difficult to balance neighborhood wishes and developer expectation. He suggested that the City should continue to reach out to the community, for example, through flyers and monthly town meetings.

Responding to Councilmember Ransom, he mentioned the cottage housing ordinance, which he said was innovative. He said he would like to see more of this approach.

Mr. Broili concluded that he has been part of the process long enough to know how it operates. He felt he could make a real contribution on the Planning Commission.

Responding to Councilmember Fimia, he said he has attended ten or twelve Planning Commission meetings. He also attended one or two of each of the Planning Commission working groups for the Comprehensive Plan update. He said he has a "pretty good" understanding of the Comprehensive Plan and Development Code.

Councilmember Ransom asked him why he wants to be on the Planning Commission. He reiterated that he brings a good understanding of low impact sustainable development, and he would like to look for more and better ways to protect the environment.

Christian Eggen

Mr. Eggen said he is a 30-year resident of the City and has a great affection for it. He described his educational background in electrical engineering and described himself as an ardent environmentalist who has been active in the Paramount Park Neighborhood Group and wetland restoration. He said he has compared Shoreline's environmental regulations with those of other cities when issues have been raised before the Planning Commission.

Responding to Councilmember Chang, Mr. Eggen said he is a leader at his work and has a reputation of interacting well with others. He said he tries to distinguish between "an enemy and an occasional opponent," and therefore does not allow relationships to get destructive. He said he is a Democratic Precinct Committee Officer and in that role has worked with others and gone out into his neighborhood.

Responding to Councilmember Grace, he said the Planning Commission must make allowances for public input at the decision-making stage and make sure people feel they are being heard. He said he doesn't favor the recent restrictions on public testimony at Council meetings and favors the restoration of the ability to speak on action items. He said he felt the Planning Commission has "bent over backwards" to take public comment. Another way of soliciting public input is to widen the number of individuals who receive notice of City actions. He used as an example the 15th Avenue NE project and said not enough people know about the changes.

Responding to Mayor Hansen, Mr. Eggen said his strengths, in addition to his science and engineering background, are that he works well with people, does his homework, is a hard worker, and is enthusiastic about having the position.

Responding to Councilmember Fimia, he reiterated the importance of wider notification and making sure that input is solicited at a point it can make a difference in the decision-making process. He felt people realize that we need to find places to live and jobs for people in our community. He said neighbors will accept growth if they are made to feel a part of it. He suggested town meetings in the neighborhoods and perhaps even in private homes.

Responding to Councilmember Ransom, he said the Planning Commission should focus on plans and codes, but Commissioners should also commit to spending time interacting with citizens. He said Planning Commissioners should be willing to present issues to the public and solicit their input. He said this would mean more meetings and would require the buy-in of the other Commissioners, but he would be willing to make this commitment.

Responding to Councilmember Fimia, Mr. Eggen said he has attended eight Planning Commission meetings. He has read the Comprehensive Plan twice and is very familiar with the building codes related to projects and critical areas.

He asked about the timeframe for completion of the Comprehensive Plan update. Mayor Hansen said it must be completed by December of this year. Mr. Eggen concluded that he considers himself a citizen activist with a technical background. He is concerned that people are aware of what the City is doing. His goal would be to get more people involved in the process.

David Harris

Mr. Harris said he has completed one term on the Planning Commission and has been a 20-year self-employed home-builder in the area. He described himself as quiet and thoughtful and he contested the low rating he was given in the initial interview. He said his goal is to balance public and private needs, emphasizing that he has always tried to protect private property rights. He said he opposed recreational vehicle screening and fence height regulations as over regulation. He said his goal is tolerance and that we have to learn how to live together and relate to each other.

Responding to Councilmember Chang, Mr. Harris said he is quiet on the Planning Commission but he speaks up when he has an opinion. He is a good listener and wants to hear what others have to say. He will not simply reiterate someone else's point.

Responding to Councilmember Grace, he suggested that Planning Commissioners respond to public comments as happens at City Council meetings. He said speakers should be promised a follow-up in writing or at the next meeting if the response is unknown at the time.

Responding to Mayor Hansen, he said his strength is his background in dealing with many area building departments—with this comes the knowledge of how it feels to be treated with respect and how it feels to be “brushed off.” He said he has a practical knowledge of construction, utilities and infrastructure needs.

Responding to Councilmember Fimia, he said the best way to balance the needs of neighbors and developers is to not allow variances to building codes. Sticking to regulations provides everyone with predictability. He said the best way to protect neighborhoods is not to create substandard lots. Then the neighborhoods will only build out to what is allowed in the plan. He said currently developers feel “picked on.” in the process. On the other side, citizens must be kept updated about regulations and education is the key to understanding what is going on. He said the City must bring both sides together and allow the process plenty of time so there are no surprises. He felt if presented properly, the public will accept single family projects.

Responding to Councilmember Ransom, Mr. Harris reiterated that the area not being covered now at the Planning Commission meetings is the response to public input. He felt this could be addressed by answering questions at the meetings. He also said Commissioners need to come to the meetings prepared and to have read their materials thoroughly. He also felt that sometimes the meetings could be longer in order to address fully the matters at hand. He said the Planning Commissioners are very intelligent and have diverse opinions and ideas yet they work well together. He stressed the importance of balancing personalities and getting along. He also noted there could be better public notice about the meetings. He said the key is to get to people “before they are mad at us.”

In conclusion, Mr. Harris said he has enjoyed his time on the Planning Commission and emphasized his community involvement, including the 23 years he has been a volunteer with the Fire Department and his community service with the Girls Scouts. He said he looks forward to designing Fircrest when the time comes because that area has lots of potential. He also noted that sometimes the Planning Commission is asked to deal with items that he, as an individual, might not support. He said the important thing is to reach consensus. If this does not happen and your opinion does not prevail, one must accept the decision and move on.

Carol Doering

Ms. Doering said she feels a sense of responsibility to the community and her colleagues on the Planning Commission. She felt the subcommittee’s conclusion that she was the weakest candidate was irrational and insulting. She has attended meetings twice a month, or more, for the past four years. She has met with citizens, reviewed and analyzed codes and the Comprehensive Plan, and attended workshops and charrettes. She has worked additional hours with the subcommittee that reviewed the environmental aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. She felt that to achieve consistency, she and Mr. Harris should be given the opportunity to continue.

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Continuing, Ms. Doering stated her belief that Councilmember Fimia's disagreements with her employer, Sound Transit, colored the evaluation done by the original interview panel.

Responding to Councilmember Chang, Ms. Doering said that communications among Planning Commissioners is going well. She said they attended a workshop last May on this very topic and she was responsible for organizing it. The upshot of the workshop was development by a subcommittee, of which she was a member, of ground rules for how the Commissioners communicate with each other and the public. The Planning Commission adopted these rules.

Responding to Councilmember Grace, Ms. Doering said she would like to see more professional information given to the media to try to eliminate errors in newspaper stories. She stressed the importance of the City building relationships with the media and helping the media understand the complicated planning issues before the City.

Responding to Mayor Hansen, she said her strength is that she is able to approach planning from a user's perspective. She has lived in the community for 33 years and she knows Shoreline's issues and problems. She said she could attest to the need for a good Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Fimia stated that she and Ms. Doering have known each other for a long time, long before Sound Transit began. She stated emphatically that Ms. Doering's employment did not effect Councilmember Fimia's analysis. Councilmember Fimia said there were many strong candidates and she would be happy to share her notes on the interviews.

Responding to Councilmember Fimia's question about balancing the needs of neighborhoods with those of developers, Ms. Doering said that the Growth Management Act sets out the requirements, and this balancing is the hardest thing a City must do. She said that actions must be based on how people, live, work and play.

Councilmember Fimia clarified that she was asking about how the City can mitigate the interactions, and Ms. Doering said that the City already has public notice requirements in place. She felt it was important to notice the residents as well as the property owners. She said the City or developer must not be expected to do all the work; the citizens must be ready to ask questions and look for information.

Responding to Councilmember Ransom, Ms. Doering said she is proud of the changes that have occurred in the Planning Commission. She felt there used to be a sense of being disrespectful and domineering and this is no longer the case. She said the Commission now demonstrates openness and tries to be inviting. She said one thing that could be done would be workshops in planning issues at local grocery stores. Of course, this would take additional time and more funding.

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In conclusion, Ms. Doering expressed sorrow that the whole community is in such an “estranged” time. She said people do not feel the process is available to them because they feel the tension in the process.

Responding to Mayor Hansen’s question about whether this has always been the case or is something new, Ms. Doering said she does not enjoy attending Councilmembers where people call the Councilmembers names. She said she is tired of watching and hearing this. She concluded that she would like to finish the job she has been asked to do and she has enjoyed her time so far on the Commission.

Mayor Hansen declared the meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Sharon Mattioli, City Clerk

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