



## **Memorandum**

**DATE:** April 11, 2006

**TO:** Shoreline Planning Commission

**FROM:** Steven Cohn, Senior Planner, PADS

**RE:** Planning Commission Retreat Discussion

At the April 20 meeting, we will continue our discussion of the upcoming Planning Commission retreat. To help get your creative juices flowing, we are including two summaries from last year's retreat: One was a list developed at the retreat in March 2005, the other lists ideas developed at a follow-up meeting in April.

When you read these summaries, think about the ideas, issues, or questions you'd like to cover in this year's retreat. The focus will likely be on process issues, but could cover items of substance (for example, questions about specific aspects of the Comprehensive Plan). I expect this discussion item to take 10-15 minutes and provide an initial step in developing the major retreat topics to be covered. (I mentioned at your last meeting that the retreat will probably take place sometime in July. None of you have gotten back to me yet as to your vacation plans so we might schedule around them).

If you have questions about the upcoming retreat discussion or any of the ideas on the summary memos, please contact me at 546-1418.

### Attachments

1. 2005 Planning Commission Retreat Report
2. April 21, 2005 follow-up discussion

# Attachment 1



## **2005 Planning Commission Retreat Report**

**Thursday, March 10**

**6:00 pm – 10:00 pm**

**Shoreline Fire Department Training Center**

**Facilitators: Julie Modrzejewski and Marci Wright**

### ***Retreat Objectives:***

- To openly share and engage with one another - to learn to work better as a team – to regain perspective – to have fun
- To evaluate 2003 goals and to identify and celebrate the Planning Commission's 2004 accomplishments
- To create Planning Commission expectations of staff
- To create Planning Commission expectation of Planning Commission (added)
- To create staff expectations of Planning Commission
- To discuss the role of the Planning Commission
- To discuss the Planning Commission's relationship with the City Council

### ***Retreat Ground Rules:***

1. We are all equal participants (Planning Commissioners and staff) and will participate fully in discussion and decision-making.
2. The facilitators will manage the discussion, and as managers of the discussion, they may intervene to keep the conversation on track, task, and time.
3. We will be honest, open, and will critique without criticism.
4. We will not interrupt others when they have the floor.
5. No one or two people will dominate the discussion.
6. We will stick to the topic under discussion.
7. Each person will strive to be complete and concise.
8. For this retreat, if a decision is needed, the group will make decisions by consensus, which is defined by 1) everyone's favorite choice, and if not possible, 2) what everyone can live with.
9. Once a decision is reached, everyone will fully support the decision.

### ***2003 Goals***

*Goal 1: Make the best decisions possible on behalf of the community by involving all commission members equitably and efficiently in the discussion that lead to those discussions.*

There was consensus that the Planning Commission (PC) was meeting this goal, should continue to strive to meet this goal, and that Commission Chair David Harris was doing a great job.

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*Goal 2: Involve more citizens in the Planning Commission's work, and ensure that their ideas and opinions are provided in ways that help improve the quality of our decisions.*

There was diverse discussion surrounding this goal, which led to a brainstorming of "solutions," such as having the PC meet with the City's neighborhood coordinator and having virtual focus groups (via email). This item was moved into the "parking lot," with particular focus on reviewing the Comp Plan public process.

*Goal 3: Ensure that the staff's oral presentations to the Commission provide new information not already presented in the written packets sent to each member before a meeting.*

There was consensus that staff had improved and should continue to focus on this.

### ***2004 Accomplishments***

- Received business cards
- PC completed its work on the Comp Plan
- Reported out on Comp Plan and three master plans
- Successfully decided all quasi-judicial actions
- Maintained good, professional, honest, trusting working relationships within the PC
- Successfully implemented subcommittee structure
- PC provided direction to staff and staff followed it
- Tours were effective
- Unified voice to the Council on central Shoreline
- All members of the PC have effectively helped us rise to the appropriate high level
- Treated each other with respect and operated inclusively (unanimous votes!)
- Produced quality products

### ***Expectations***

#### ***Planning Commission Expectations of Staff:***

- Include pros and cons in staff reports
- Highlight perceived areas of controversy and opportunities in staff reports
- Update the PC with what the Council adopted—include this as part of the Director's report at the beginning of PC meetings
- Carry the PC recommendation forward unchanged and communicate back to the PC if staff proposes changes
- Keep presentations brief-highlight the main points and use visuals
- Answer questions concisely
- At the beginning of the presentation, set boundaries for the PC by defining our scope and keeping us on task
- Bring topics of interest to the PC as part of our continuing education (e.g., economy, traffic, lessons learned from initiatives-how well are NC sub area plan working, charettes and open houses, cottage housing, etc, and provide periodic rundown of issues brewing in community, Council, PADS issues, etc.)

### *Staff Expectations of the Planning Commission:*

- Continue to treat everyone with respect: Commission members, staff, public
- Ask good questions of staff and applicants
- Prepare/read the materials and give staff a “heads up” outside of meeting – give us feedback
- Focus and limit the debate to the topic at hand without losing consensus decision making within the allotted time
- Remember meetings are public and taped—be aware side conversations show up on tape
- Respect staff workload—Tim will alert the PC about workload issues—this doesn’t mean the PC should stop asking questions or for more information – it means that Tim will inform the PC if their request has workload constraints

### *As Staff We Are Committed:*

- To provide professional, high quality staff work
- To be accessible and responsive
- To respect the values, opinions and decisions of the Commission and Commissioners
- To provide professional development opportunities and training
- To provide legal assistance upon request

### *Role of the Planning Commission*

- To provide recommendations to the City Council on quasi-judicial and legislative matters based on public input, community values and the Comp Plan (this was taken directly from an index card)
- Review staff recommendations and come to a concise recommendation of our own to the City Council
- Help the Council identify what they need to deliberate on
- Review and revise the Comp Plan
- Keep an eye on the long-term
- Get all issues on the table and advise the Council
- Be a place where citizens can be heard out loud
- Implement the GMA and Development Code
- Provide in-depth analysis of the issue so the Council doesn’t have to
- Provide leadership to the City of Shoreline
- Clarify, assess citizen input for the Council
- Represent community in planning and development issues in the City
- Be more active and connected to the Council
- Advocate on outcome of certain issues – sell legislative issues to the Council

### *Framing the Discussion with the City Council*

- What role do you want the Planning Commission to play?  
**ACTION ITEM: PC will review the roles as listed above in the context of the SMC and prepare a summary, which will be used in your discussion with the Council**
- How can we communicate with the Council? What is the most useful, best way?
- Clarify our relationship with the Council and what they want us to do?
- How can we be of more service to you [the Council]...here’s what we’ve been doing (the role we believe we have been playing) and confirm it with them

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- Composition of the PC may be an issue for the Council
- Provide a historical perspective for the Council
- **ACTION ITEM: Chairman Harris will contact Mayor Hansen to discuss having a joint dinner meeting with the Council**
- **ACTION ITEM: Tim will work with City Manager's Office to schedule the joint meeting (potential dates: May 23 or June 13, 6:00-7:30 pm)**

### *Parking Lot Issues*

*Note: Some items are from the flipchart and some are from individual index cards.*

- **ACTION ITEM: Create Planning Commission expectations of Planning Commissioners** (example: If questions are asked of staff prior to the PC meeting, as part of the agenda item discussion the Commissioner will state their question and the staff's response as part of the discussion and for the record)
- Review the public process of the Comp Plan update
- Staff presentations – what is the role of the applicant?
- Do we set the standard for the future?
- Is the Shoreline vision still valid? Who shepards the vision?
- **ACTION ITEM: Report annually to the City Council (target for August 2005 – PC Subcommittee: Don, Rocky, Will and Michael)**
- Submit letter for transmittal signed by the PC Chair, or some other mechanism
- Revisit Goal #2:
  - Either revise (i.e., things are okay) or add specific responsibilities how to accomplish: a) whether City Councilmembers and staff, b) or commissioners themselves (farm out and visit neighborhood groups)
  - We need to find a way to balance the input from folks who show up versus what the majority might desire
  - Mail a more concise and educational version of staff report to community chairs with an invitation to attend the meetings (sometimes the notices are not very good at interpretation)
  - Add a “Planning” section to the different community newsletters that identify issues, meetings, upcoming projects, etc.
  - As planners and planning commissioners we want to feel our work is important, do we have the perspective to know when public interest drops off? Public outreach efforts at some point have diminishing returns. Of course, we could do more outreach but at this time there doesn't seem to be a sizable, untapped interest. What if instead of the same three or four voices we get just three more voices that return over and over? I think there isn't much more interest even after all the noticing we've done. We may be inflating our role and purpose – especially when many citizens know that the real decision will be made at the Council level.

# Attachment 2

## ITEM 10.A - ATTACHMENT 2

### April 21, 2005 Discussion of Planning Commission Expectations of Planning Commission (continued discussion from Planning Commission Retreat)

**Context of the Discussion** – “Why are we having a discussion about expectations of each other and of the Commission as a whole?”

- To identify ways to improve the quality of discussions, recommendations, public outreach/involvement and decisions
- To increase our capacity to accomplish more

The list below is the “Planning Commission Expectations of the Planning Commission” that was developed as an outcome of the 2005 Retreat. This list was used as a basis for the April 21<sup>st</sup> discussion, where the Commission participated in a “vote by dots” exercise to select the top four expectations they each felt were most important to work on for the purposes of enhancing the quality of their work and their ability to accomplish more in the time allotted. The **bolded items** in the below list represent the top four expectations that received the most “dots”.

- Contact staff with your questions prior to the meeting to allow staff to research in advance
- If you need more time during a particular discussion, say you need more time
- Read and be familiar with the material
- Come to meetings prepared
- Listen to each other
- Tell the truth, even if our peers don't like it
- Be honest; forth-coming
- **Do we need to ask questions on everything? Are these questions critical to our decision? Are we stalling our decision?**
- **Ask concise questions**
- If there are problems, we are responsible for communicating them to each other
- Trust the information that staff provides
- Be more efficient – get more done in less time
- **Minimize our thinking out loud and be mindful of the number of follow up questions you ask**
- Chair leads an initial “straw vote” and offers the minority perspective the chance to move to the front of the discussion queue
- Do not interrupt – wait your turn to speak
- **We need to frame the question and keep to issues that are related to the discussion**
- *Develop a method to prioritize agenda items and items currently identified as “parking lot” or “future agenda” items\**
- *Give the chair the permission to keep the Commission on task\**

\* *These expectations were added to the list at the April 21<sup>st</sup> Planning Commission meeting.*



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Following the dot exercise, the Commission then identified a theme. The top four expectations were all related to questions: framing of questions, number of questions, asking concise questions, purpose of questions. A really good discussion regarding the intent of these expectations relating to questions ensued. A few highlights and moments of awareness from this discussion included the following:

- o Questions allow the Commission the opportunity to explore complex issues. More time should be allowed for the Commission to explore complex issues with the public.
- o The Commission debated the value of rebuttal comments following a Commissioner's dissenting opinion. The question was asked, should time be spent on persuading each other. The group generally agreed there is value in taking the time to "point out" why other members of the Commission see an issue differently. That often this bit of information is helpful in building consensus.
- o The line of questioning in deliberations is used to build the record of how decisions have been reached by the Commission. This record (Planning Commission Minutes) is forwarded to City Council with the Planning Commission recommendation for their use as they make decisions.
- o Each Commissioner has an opinion, however once someone has expressed an opinion it is on record there is no need to repeat it.
- o Commissioners should refrain from asking questions that are of personal interest if they are not related to the topic the Commission is voting upon.
- o There should be less concern over the amount of time spent and more concern regarding the quality of the process.
- o It is helpful when Commissioners arrive at the meeting with clearly defined points of discussion and/or questions.
- o A decision was made to add an item from the "parking lot" or "future agenda item" list to the Planning Commission Agenda for discussion as "time permits," and that item would remain on the agenda until it has been discussed.

### **Next Steps:**

The discussion raised the awareness of how their deliberation styles can affect both the quantity and quality of the Commission's work both positively and negatively. With this awareness, the Commission hopes to make improvements that will yield more informed decisions in a more timely fashion with the hopes of being able to address even more of the issues that are of interest to the Commission. The Commission agreed to check back in a year at the 2006 Retreat to see how they are doing with the implementation of the top four expectations for the Commission.