

SUMNER PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, May 29, 2003

7:00 p.m.

Sumner City Hall

1104 Maple Street

CALL TO ORDER

RICHARDSON called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. RICHARDSON, Vice Chair acted as meeting Chair in place of MYERS.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Bush, Ganz, Nalder, Powers and Richardson

Members Absent: Myers (notified) and Walter (notified)

Also Present: Ryan Windish, Senior Planner

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of Minutes was set over the next scheduled Planning Commission meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

RICHARDSON welcomed GARY GANZ, the new Planning Commissioner.

1) Pipestem/Infill Development (Public Hearing)

WINDISH reviewed for the Commission the highlights of Staff's Memorandum Re: Proposed Zoning Code Amendment Regarding Pipestem Lots (*Project No.: PLN2003-00026*). (*Exhibits to Staff's Memorandum*

included: "A" Majority Opinion; "B" Proposed Ordinance; "C" Notice of Public Hearing; "D" Determination of Non-significance 5/13/03; "E" Results of Infill survey 3/20/03; and "F" Public Comments (letters and emails).

STAFF recommends that the Planning Commission APPROVE a recommendation to City Council to adopt the Proposed Ordinance.

COMMISSIONERS had the following questions/comments:

RICHARDSON asked what was found out about the length of the pipestem lots and the driveways to them regarding fire access?

WINDISH stated that the discussion was that they would leave that to the fire code. The code is 150 feet and a fire hydrant within 400 feet. If the pipestem is really long there may be a situation where you have to put in a fire hydrant. The existing fire code is adequate to cover that concern.

BUSH had a question with regard to the compatibility portion of Staff's memorandum. Would a multifamily dwellings be permitted as it is written?

WINDISH responded that it would be allowed if it met all the other requirements. In that particular zone up to one four-plex is allowed per block. Multifamily is also required to go through the Design Review process, as well as a Conditional Use Permit process, which requires public hearing and public notice. The intent is to allow for an intermix of different kinds of housing in town.

RICHARDSON opened the meeting for public comment.

WAYNE CAPPS, 408 Sumner Avenue appeared. One of the reasons they moved to this town was the nice sized lots in their neighborhood. When Ryan Windish gave his report he mentioned that the Growth Management Act says to fill in vacant lots. It does not say to create vacant lots and fill them in. They recently had a pipestem lot put next to them. The lots in the area they live are large, which would potentially allow for more pipestem development. It was not their intent when they moved to Sumner to have a house put in right next to them. They like the big lots they have. They have lived here since 1957. When you move to a place you have no idea a house is going to be built right next to you. Now, with pipestem development it is possible that houses may be built all around them. If they wanted they could divide their lot, but they are not going to because they like the quality of the life they have and the nice sized garden in their back yard. They do not like the idea of houses going in all around them and would appreciate it if that would be taken into consideration. CAPPS submitted a letter to be entered into the record (See attached Exhibit "A" to May 29th Meeting Minutes).

DENNIS TOMPKINS, 324 Sumner Avenue appeared. He is concerned about the marketability of the original older homes in a split lot situation. For example, there is a house on the corner of Sumner and Willow. The original house was put up for sale. It originally had a nice sized back yard. It was reduced to 2 to 3 feet from the fence line, and the deck looks out onto the neighbor. The house did not sell and eventually had to be rented out. He notes that the majority of the letters in favor of split lots are relatively similar. It looks as though someone did a lot of groundwork. They state they are for the lots if they have the appropriate square footage, however, they are willing to waive the width requirement. They put their house up for sale and it sold in one day. It had a nice house and a lot of trees on a big lot. They sold because of the threat of a four-plex that would have been in their backyard. The four-plex did not go through because it was a foot or two too short and the variance was denied. Now they are not sure what is going to happen back there. It may be a possibility. He noticed that most of the people opposed to split lots have been residents for 30 to 40 years. They too moved here for the character of Sumner and the lots. When he first moved here there were no fences. He was sad to see them come. He enjoyed being able to look all the way down to Willow Street. He understands that changes occur, however, he does not feel that having a lot of lots chopped up is good for the character of Sumner. If the lots have to

be split, he would be in support of reducing the height requirement and he would hope that caution is used in allowing a lot more development which will profit the property owners and developers, however, may not enhance the neighborhoods.

BO NORBJERG, 828 18th St. S.W., Puyallup appeared. He owns a house on Alder. He is in favor of the changes and the recommendation that pipestem lot widths be reduced to 50 feet. He understands that there are people in town opposed to it, but where were they when the GMA was drafted and Sumner proposed all these changes to begin with. All of a sudden here they are now that it might happen in their own backyard. One of the opposing parties already has a house in their backyard. One question he had pertaining to the height requirement is, assuming someone already had a two story house to the rear of their lot and they wish to develop it as a pipestem lot, how would that person go about it? He does not feel that a half story would necessarily position you to look into someone's backyard. Regardless of what is decided about the height requirement, he feels it is something he can live with. We need to be concerned with compliance with the GMA. There are few lots that can be developed as pipestem lots. Most of the lots cannot be short platted because of access problems. There really is a very limited number of potential pipestem lots that can be developed. He feels that it is a good thing and will probably reduce housing costs.

SHARI TOMPKINS, 324 Sumner Avenue appeared. She wanted to expand a little bit upon Mr. Norbjerg's comment. It is her house that he was referring to with the "house" behind it. It is a mother-in-law's house. It is not a pipestem. She is against pipestem lots. She has been a resident and her parents have been residents of Sumner. It is her belief that it is not very good for the City. She has submitted a letter that she feels sums up her feelings.

GLORIA SCHALLER 1003 Willow Street appeared. She has lived in Sumner since 1941. She does not believe that pipestem development will improve anybody's life. She sees no reason behind it. She lives on a 50 foot lot. A house was thrown behind her. She is deadlocked. You could not get a fire truck back there. You would have to go around and jump a fence on the other side. A 50 foot lot is not big enough. Her house is a small two bedroom. Her lot should have been viewed. She feels that it is silly to carve up these backyards when people bought them for that reason.

NANCY BAKER appeared for KRISTI J. COPPIN, 6302 Parker Rd. East. BAKER read into the record a letter from COPPIN to the Planning Commission with regard to the pipestem development issue. See attached Exhibit "B" to May 29th Meeting Minutes.

NANCY BAKER, 403 Alder Avenue appeared. Referred to Handout Re: lots under 60 feet in width. See attached Exhibit "C" to May 29th Meeting Minutes. To have a 50 foot wide lot would not be that unusual. She further referred to an article in the Tacoma News Tribune on May 6th regarding schools and their enrollment. Don Eismann stated that the rise in home prices in the district discourages young families from moving to Sumner. It is supply and demand. There are hardly any lots available in the downtown core at this time to build a new house on. Pipestem lots would probably be the only way to get more lots in Sumner. Do pipestem houses change the character of Sumner? She does not think so. As for the people driving into the town of Sumner, what do you think they are going to remember when they leave? Will they remember pipestem houses on a 6,000 square foot lot, or will they remember the train station, all the warehouses and a 650,000 square foot Fred Meyer shopping center?

SHELIA SHERVANL, 327 Alder Avenue appeared. She moved here about 13 years ago. What attracted her to this town was that it was a small town and the farmland. Now it is warehouses. She thinks that that takes away from the downtown more than the pipestem. She lives on a large lot and her husband passed away 40 years ago. She has not been able to keep that lot up. She would rather see two homes on a smaller lot well kept, than one home on a large lot with weeds overgrown. She is for it and it would help her financially too. If she could sell off the house, it would help her pay for her home and she would have a smaller place to take care of so she can live here. As it is now, she is thinking about selling and moving.

DAVE BAKER, 403 Alder Avenue appeared. He referred to his notes on page 3 (*previously provided to the Planning Commission*). He corrected his notes in that it should be "400" housing units short in Sumner - not "1,200" housing units short. There is a new house being built right across the street from him at this time which he is happy about. That house will be closer to him than if he short plat his place and built a house in the back. With regard to the house on Willow Street referred to by Mr. Tompkins, that lot was created years and years ago, and the original owner was allowed to build a deck clear back to the property line. When the lot was purchased and they went to build a new house on the lot, it was found out that 305 Sumner had built clear back to their property line. It was not the new house builder's fault that 305 Sumner built back to the line. He was allowed somehow, either legally or illegally, to build the deck right on the property line. He would like to see the Planning Commission make a recommendation to the proposals listed by Staff.

DENNIS LIVINGSTON 326 Alder Avenue appeared. He is no stranger to pipestem. He built a house in Sumner on Willow Street in 1977. At that time there were three other lots, one beside him on Willow and two behind him. The realtor tried to get him to buy all four lots and he declined. He bought the three lots and built on them. He has a two story house behind him and the other two houses were ramblers. He suffered no adverse effects living in that situation with a two story house behind him. At this time he lives at 326 across the street from the Bakers. He has a wide lot. On the street behind him there are three houses going up. There will be five backyards abutting his backyard. He thinks the plans are very good.

CURT BROWN, 328 Sumner Avenue appeared. He feels the facts are important. If we are just counting votes by letters, pipestems will work, but if you count facts and substance the letters in favor just say we like them, let them be there. There is no substance for improving the community. The letters against have a lot of reasons why they should not be there. He feels that substance is more important than quantity. He believes that diversity is good, which is why he believes that pipestem lots should be limited from being developed. Large lots are important. If we allow pipestems, especially at 50 feet, there could be many pipestems. Diversity will go away. All lots will be small. That's not diversity. Price variation in the community will go away as well. People value large lots. He feels that doing away with large lots does not maintain diversity – price wise or size wise. People that outgrow their homes buy larger homes. People whose homes or property becomes too large should buy down. They should give younger families the opportunity to raise a family on a large lot like they raised their children. He does not think that is going to happen. Are we going to be a retirement community with small lots? He hopes not. We need a diversity of ages. We do not have to divide existing City lots. There are vacant lots that are available. We are acting like Sumner is an island and there is no place to live and we have to cut all these lands into little blocks. He does not feel Sumner is an island. There are a lot of street front lots still available in Sumner. He lives right next door to a pipestem that was put in about a year ago. When that occurs they put a gray pipe next to the power pole to run power underground. Nothing can be grown in that area. There is less privacy. It increases noise. Pipestem lots allow more cars to park on the street. What really bothers him is that the mailman will not deliver to the back lot. There has to be another mailbox on the curb. That is a real deficit to our community. There are other issues as well. When the pipestem was put up by his house, the contractors took hunks out of the curb. He does not see how pipestem will benefit the community.

STEVE ALLSOP, 124 Willow Street appeared. He introduced into the record the public comment from the City Council meeting November 18, 2002.

WINDISH indicated that these minutes had been given to the Planning Commission earlier.

Public Comment was closed at this time.

RICHARDSON opened the meeting for Commission questions/comments regarding Staff's presentation and public comment.

BUSH stated that she would like to see multifamily units on pipestem lots addressed.

RICHARDSON asked if a multifamily dwelling could exist with a height requirement?

WINDISH stated that it could, however, it would also have to meet a lot of other requirements, such as the setback requirements and parking requirements.

BUSH stated that she would be in favor of a prohibition as to development of multifamily on pipestem lots.

WINDISH suggested that the Planning Commission could motion to amend.

NALDER asked if lot frontage and access frontage is the same? Is it correct that if they were doing it through an easement that they do not have lot frontage?

WINDISH illustrated access frontage at the board.

NALDER asked if there would be a square footage requirement for multifamily?

WINDISH stated that there would be. For any one unit you have to have 2,125 square feet per unit. You also have to provide for off-street parking. For a 2 bedroom apartment it would be 1½ spaces. If you wanted to do a duplex with 2, 2 bedroom units you are looking at providing for 6 parking spaces around 300 to 400 square feet per parking space. Once you start to go multifamily there are other things that will use up the area of a lot. You have to have a good size parcel to start with.

BUSH asked if Staff felt it would be better to just prohibit multifamily or to just assume it is not possible?

WINDISH stated that they could recommend that it be put in the code that multifamily is prohibited on pipestem lots. There would be size restrictions on any lot. It would have to be a bigger lot for multifamily.

GANZ suggested that with regard to the size of pipestem lots that they be 20,000 square feet.

POWERS stated that he would like to see the recommendation that there be no multifamily homes built on pipestem lots where the pipestem lot is less than 20,000 square feet.

RICHARDSON stated that he too agrees with BUSH that there be no multifamily whatsoever on pipestem.

NALDER asked if the minimum standard is already defined, or if they are arbitrarily suggesting 20,000 square feet? He noted that 12,000 is the current largest minimum standard.

WINDISH responded with 20,000 the recommendation is that you can go to 2 stories. You would still be bound by the current setbacks. WINDISH suggested maybe putting in a minimum width also. The minimum width for 12,000 square feet is 100 feet.

RICHARDSON asked Staff for their comments on multifamily development on pipestem lots.

WINDISH commented that it would be promoting infill and continuing the pattern of development down town. If multifamily went through all the Design Review requirements and conditional use permit requirements and met all the other standards, it would be fine.

GANZ moved to accept Staff's Recommendation. POWERS seconded the motion. A role call vote was had as follows:

BUSH **Yes**

GANZ **Yes**
NALDER **No**
POWERS **Yes**
RICHARDSON **Yes**

Motion passed 4 to 1.

BUSH moved to amend Staff's Recommendation to prohibit multifamily dwellings on pipestem lots. **GANZ** seconded the motion. A role call vote was had as follows:

BUSH **Yes**
GANZ **Yes**
NALDER **No**
POWERS **Yes**
RICHARDSON **Yes**

Motion passed 4 to 1.

DISCUSSION was had with regard to lot width requirements and easements.

NALDER motioned to amend Staff's Recommendation to prohibit the 15 foot access easement requirement for pipestem lots, and to include the 15 foot access as part of the total lot area, as opposed to as a separate easement. **GANZ** seconded the motion. A role call vote was had as follows:

BUSH **No**
GANZ **Yes**
NALDER **Yes**
POWERS **No**
RICHARDSON **No**

Motion failed 3 to 2.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no Correspondence.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

BUSH commented that this has been a difficult issue. She feels that this has been a compromise.

NALDER stated that he will not be at the next Planning Commission Meeting.

STAFF COMMENTS

WINDISH had the following Staff Comments:

- 1) Next Planning Commission Meeting there will be a slide presentation showing growth in Sumner throughout the last 12 years to give a better sense of how the City has grown over the last decade. They will also go over the vision statement in the Comprehensive Plan.
- 2) The Public Hearing on the Critical Areas Regulations has been moved to July.

ADJOURNMENT

NALDER motioned for meeting adjournment at 8:32 p.m. BUSH seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Ryan Windish, AICP

Senior Planner