

City of Sumner

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Regular Meeting

February 05, 2004

7:00 p.m.

Sumner City Hall 1104 Maple Street

CALL TO ORDER

MYERS called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Bush, Ganz, Myers, Nalder and Walter

Members Absent: Powers (Notified)

Also Present: Ryan Windish, Senior Planner

APPROVAL OF MINUTE

GANZ motioned to approve the December 4, 2003 Regular Meeting Minutes as written. WALTER seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

1) Vision Statement Recommendation (Action)

WINDISH summarized for the Commissioners the proposed changes to the Vision Statement. The changes are minor and based on discussion from the June Planning Commission Meeting and the joint meeting with City Council conducted a week ago. The first paragraph recognizes community needs, such as community improvements. In this paragraph "storm drainage control" was deleted and "management of traffic" was added, as it is a much bigger issue at this time according to the survey. Furthermore, the term "quality of life" was added, and the year "2013" was changed to "2024" throughout. The Commitment section emphasizes that although things are changing fast, we want to preserve the small town characteristics of Sumner despite those changes.

MYERS asked Staff why "special taxing district" was deleted?

WINDISH responded that it was at the suggestion of his director. The believed reasoning is that special taxing districts are not as prevalent as they used to be. If the Commissions feel it is relevant it can be kept in.

MYERS commented that his main concern in that regard is the Library.

WINDISH noted that the term "library" could be inserted in its place?

MYERS stated that that was not necessary.

WINDISH continued with Community Layout. "... designed to encourage walking and community interaction and exemplifies..." (our small town character) was added. To the first paragraph on page 12 "Traffic calming and other measures have been taken to reduce speeds, making streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists" was added, and to the following paragraph "Where appropriate" and "There are areas of 'mixed-use', predominately around the train station, where a mix of housing and businesses creates a vibrant and diverse living environment". Under Residential Character, "... and creates housing opportunities for all of life's stages" was added. Similarly, added to the next paragraph was "... and variety of housing types".

GANZ commented that he is not in favor of smaller lots, and is opposed to the language in that section, "lot sizes decrease" .

WINDISH, in response, directed the Commissioners to the footnote. Decreasing lot sizes supports having a place where our children can afford to live and work.

WALTER added that the current leadership does not support that goal of smaller lots.

MYERS stated that current leadership does support smaller lots as opposed to apartments as a form of affordable housing. He is also in support of smaller lots. There is a demand for them.

WINDISH added that, in discussions with City Council about changing zoning in East Sumner, they were opposed to multifamily as infill, but were accepting of low density residential with 4000 sq. ft. minimum lot sizes. King County's minimum lot size is 3,600 sq. ft.

NALDER commented that smaller lot sizes would further support the statement "...meet the varied needs and lifestyles found in Sumner."

WINDISH continued through Residential Character. "... A higher density of housing that is predominately owner-occupied and keeps with the overall small town character of Sumner is concentrated in the downtown where it is in easy walking distance of downtown services and the train station." was added at the end of that section. This section applies to the Town Center Plan to keep things within walking distance.

DISCUSSION was had regarding condominiums and lawsuits associated with condominiums.

WINDISH continued with Parks, Recreation and Open Space on page 13. In discussing the network of sidewalks and linear trails, "and associated streams", was deleted as the trial plan does not have a plan for trails along streams. To the following paragraph, "Linear trails separate development from riparian buffers and assist in the preservation of our natural resources. The City has reserved lands in a natural state for passive enjoyment and to benefit fish and wildlife" was added. Also added, on page 14, was "The arts are used to express the history, heritage, and uniqueness of Sumner. Art is incorporated into the community through park design and features, entrance ways, concerts, murals, and sculptures." It

was noted that Sumner now has an Arts Commission. Additionally, “park design” may be replaced by “public buildings and spaces” in order to make that statement more broad.

NALDER suggested eliminating the word “parks” all together.

WINDISH noted that on page 14, paragraph 2, Loyalty Park has been replaced by Heritage Park, and that “History and heritage is also maintained through established landmark and historic districts that preserve the character of the buildings in the downtown” was added at the end of that paragraph.

WINDISH added that the Economic Development section goes into the East Main Street Design Strategy. Also added to that section was “New buildings along Main Street are built in close relation to the street with parking to the rear of buildings creating a place that is more welcoming to walking and interaction.” Further, on page 15, Governance, the term governance could be changed to government. “Sumner University and other formats are utilized to educate the citizens about their community and government processes. The City’s website is used to communicate to the public and is a major resource for quick and reliable information” was also added to that section. Also briefly touched upon was linking the community through design and local transit systems serving just the Sumner area. We could possibly add the pedestrian bridge to that section as a way to link the community. WINDISH asked the Commissioners what they felt should be added to that?

GANZ suggested that a “shuttle bus” could apply.

NALDER suggested adding the pedestrian link language to Parks, Recreation and Open Space on page 13, as that section addresses various forms of transportation.

WINDISH drafted the following sentence to be added to the Parks, Recreation and Open Space section: “Sumner neighborhoods are linked by trails and bicycle networks, sidewalks and an inter-city transit system.”

NALDER commented that on page one the term “East Sumner” is used as if it were another City. He felt that using it in such a manner creates division.

WINDISH agreed.

GANZ suggested that “East Sumner” be changed to “business areas”.

NALDER asked if “Clean Air Act”, referenced under Community Layout, still went by that name?

WINDISH responded that it is still called the “Clean Air Act”.

GANZ suggested changing that to simply state “many properties have a clear view of Mt. Rainier” without referencing the Clean Air Act.

WALTER commented that the Clean Air Act has nothing to do with the City, and should probably not be included. Scenic views being preserved could be elaborated on without referencing the Clean Air Act. WALTER added that it is a nice vision, however, in 20 years we may not have any more of a solution.

NALDER asked if the “Adopt a Stream” program referenced on page 13 is still a current program?

WINDISH responded that the “Stream Team” is still in existence and that they could change it to that.

NALDER suggested using a generic term like “volunteers” so that it does not have to be changed in the future.

NALDER also noted that a “local newspaper” is mentioned on page 15. Sumner does not have a local newspaper?

WINDISH stated that it was the vision at the time that there would eventually be a local newspaper. He would like to leave that in as a vision, in the event, with population growth over the next 20 years, it becomes a viable thing to have a local newspaper.

WALTER recalled that at the last study session they had discussed taking out “...school system serves Sumner and the surrounding communities...” (on page 14).

WINDISH stated that he intended to delete that. He could modify it?

WALTER suggested deleting it all together.

WINDISH continued that no changes were made to the Values statements.

MYERS suggested changing “pray” to “worship” under the Values statements, as it would be more fitting.

NALDER asked why in the Values section, under “people”, children and seniors are set out separately? Would they not be residents? Why are only these two groups set out? I should apply to “all stages of life”.

WINDISH stated that he was trying to point out that there is diversity in the community. Sometimes seniors and children get overlooked because they are not active in the community. They are set out separately to remind us that they too are part of the community.

NALDER commented that it seemed awkward to set them out.

GANZ motioned to approve and forward to City Council the Vision Statement with the changes as discussed, and to specifically incorporate the sentence drafted by Staff as follows: “Sumner neighborhoods are linked by trails and bicycle networks, sidewalks and an inter-city transit system” and further to replace the term “East Sumner” with “business areas”. NALDER seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

2) Historic Preservation (Discussion)

WINDISH noted that Staff discussed with City Council ways of preserving the larger, older homes in Sumner. The fear is that they will be purchased and demolished and/or subdivided, and that there is no real way to protect them. The best way to protect them is to adopt a local preservation ordinance. Another way to preserve them is for them to be registered on the State or Federal register, however the owners would still have the option to demolish the place if they wanted to. The homeowners could opt to be placed on the ordinance. They would then be volunteering to keep a certain appearance and have certain restrictions on their property in terms of how they change the exterior appearance. Staff is not yet ready to launch a program, however, thought it should be looked into as a tool to preserve the historic character of the community. At a minimum, a policy statement could be drafted and added to the Comprehensive Plan, as an alternative/tool that can be used. They are just exploring the options at this time as an opening to it. Preservation can be done on a landmark basis or on a district wide level. The question to the Planning Commission is, should Staff work up a policy in that regard?

MYERS noted that some of the comments in the survey were to quit tearing down some of the old buildings.

WINDISH stated that some of those homes are probably already on a register. The owners would most likely be in favor of preserving their houses. A board or historic preservation commission could be established. He suggested possibly adding someone with historic background to the Design Commission. If changes were then proposed to a historic structure, and if those changes exceeded administrative approval, they could then be brought before the Design Commission for review.

BUSH commented that the house at the far end of Elm, near the industrial area, is beautiful. Her concern is that there will come a time when that property will be absorbed into the proposed changes for that area.

WINDISH responded that that area is zoned neighborhood commercial. The good thing about that is it gives some opportunity for the structure to be converted to a commercial use and still keep its character.

MYERS stated that most of the old houses that should have been preserved are gone other than approximately 5 houses and possibly the Ryan house. The houses remaining are not necessarily big houses. Most of the big, older homes have already been ruined. Now the oldest school in the area will be changed.

WINDISH noted that the main concern is that these older homes may be torn down and rebuilt. If there was a historic district it could be said that the area must be preserved in a particular era, i.e. 1920's craftsman.

WALTER was concerned about sticking to one era as there is a real mix of building styles in Sumner. If someone were to tear down a house, would they have to build in the designated style?

WINDISH stated that it could be rebuilt in the predominate era in that particular area.

NALDER noted that there are two different issues; the structure and the land. This would only protect the structure. Further, houses that are registered are required to use the same materials no matter what the cost for replacement of those materials. The craftsman level of skill is much higher and much more expensive. There are a lot of issues here and it would be difficult to control. The misconception is that it will preserve the structure, however, it can still be torn down.

WINDISH stated that those are the kind of things they are looking into. Both Steilacoom and Snohomish have historical districts. He could talk to them. They are trying to get a feel for whether they should look into it.

MYERS suggested adding it as a policy statement in the Comprehensive Plan, possibly as a "goal" to preserve these historic structures.

WINDISH added that it could stay at the policy level.

NALDER noted that seismic requirements might be an obstacle.

WINDISH noted that it would probably be a cost, however, if the structure was on the historic register the requirements would be more flexible.

WALTER asked if historic preservation opened up a gateway to grants and assistance?

WINDISH indicated that it could. He noted that Spokane has a lot of historic preservation areas and that they get different tax credits and other incentives which make it pencil out for the developers. In their historic preservation they also work closely with the Spokane building department. Further, historic preservation can also generate economic development which is a benefit for the City.

MYERS commented that most of the bigger, old houses in Sumner have been converted into apartments, and that they all went downhill from there.

WALTER asked if the business owners downtown have expressed an interest in historic preservation or rehabilitation?

WINDISH stated that they have not taken it that far yet, but that he could make some phone calls and do a little more research on it.

WALTER added that the historical district would not last unless something is done about it. People do, however, need to understand what they are getting into. It may be more productive to do selective homes as opposed to a district.

WINDISH stated that he would do more research on it and draft a policy for the Commissioners to review.

MYERS stated that it would be nice if a committee were set up to do a survey so that they had a better idea of what they are preserving.

NALDER suggested that it be done by the historical society.

MYERS indicated that he would be in favor of drafting a policy.

CORRESPONDENCE

WINDISH stated that there was no correspondence other than an e-mail from Robert Holler setting up a meeting for February 12th, addressing Sumner's entrance signs. The main topic is unique City entrance ways. The primary thought is having a consistent theme for signs. If anyone is interested in attending, they can contact Robert Holler or just show up.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

WALTER ask if there was an update on the traffic combing for Rivergrove, and how long it is expected to be in draft form?

WINDISH indicated that he was not sure where it sits at this time.

WALTER stated that she would call Robert Holler for an update.

NALDER reviewed for the Commissioners and Staff the following articles / news updates:

1) The History of the Endangered Species Act (newspaper article). The Act came about during the Nixon 's presidency, approximately 30 years ago. The article is very informative.

2) Supreme Court reversed itself regarding annexations (newspaper article). The judge states in the opinion that there is no fundamental constitutional right.

3) There was a lawsuit in Puyallup wherein developers request an extension on utilities (newspaper article). The developers did not want to comply with the requirements for city development. The case was settled. Seattle now has a moratorium on allowing extensions. You must be annexed into the City before you can get utilities. Further, the developer could not sue Puyallup.

4) Puyallup has announced that they have their own AM station for lahar warning systems and public notification of city events and what is going on at City Hall (newspaper article). The station covers a limited area. It is 1580 on the AM channel. It may be just recorded messages. It is for lahar and public information.

NALDER also noted that he saw on the news that FEMA's web site now has all the up-to-date flood maps for the entire United States. They are available via their web site. Also, there was an issue regarding the Convention Center in Elbe. The hold/issue is the size they want to build it versus the number of people who should be allowed to congregate in a volcanic hazard area.

NALDER added that he would probably miss the next couple of meetings.

MYERS commented that Fred Meyer is doing an excellent job. It really looks like a bunch of small buildings.

WALTER stated that she read in the newspaper that the Pierce County Chamber of Commerce is trying to promote a farmers market in Sumner.

STAFF COMMENTS

WINDISH had the following Staff comments:

1) The City is still working with Walgreen's to see what they come up with. One site requires rezoning and the other one does not. It is challenging for them to meet the East Main Street Design standards.

MYERS asked about the status of the Wendy's?

WINDISH responded that it is still up in the air. In order to get it started a street vacation is required and an extra right of way from Washington Street on the corner. The Council is willing to grant a vacation, however, they want to stipulate design requirements. The developer said that if it is required that the signs be externally lit, they will opt not to locate there. They feel it is a marginal site as is.

ADJOURNMENT

GANZ motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. NALDER seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Ryan Windish, AICP
Senior Planner