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CITY OF BREMERTON

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING March 15, 2021

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Wofford called the regular meeting of the Bremerton Planning Commission to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present

Chair Wofford
Vice Chair Tift
Commissioner Flemister
Commissioner Coughlin
Commissioner Mosiman
Commissioner Pedersen
Commissioner Rich

Staff Present

Allison Satter, Planning Manager, Department of Community Development
Sarah Lynam, Project Assistant, Department of Community Development

Others Present

Commissioners Excused

None

Quorum Certified

CHAIR CALL FOR MODIFICATIONS TO AGENDA

The agenda was accepted as presented.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COMMISSIONER FLEMISTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 22, 2021, AS SUBMITTED. COMMISSIONER RICH SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

PUBLIC MEETING

Call to the Public (public comments on any item not on the agenda)

Chair Wofford invited comments from citizens. There were none, and he closed this portion of the meeting.

Workshop: Overview of 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Docket

Ms. Satter reviewed that the Comprehensive Plan is the 20-year vision for Bremerton. It is a blueprint document that contains vision, goals and policies and can only be amended one time per year. The Zoning Code contains development regulations that are specific to developing a property, such as setbacks, lot coverage, allowed uses, parking, landscaping, signage, design, etc.

The Zoning Code can be amended as often as necessary. She advised that it is possible to process Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code amendments concurrently.

Ms. Satter explained that, following the workshop, staff will conduct more research and public outreach in preparation for additional meetings with the Commission to discuss the proposed amendments further. Staff will conduct the 60-day environmental review to identify environmental and cumulative impacts, and then the amendments will be presented to the Planning Commission for a public hearing and recommendation to the City Council. The City Council will consider the Planning Commission's recommendation and make the final decision, which must occur by the end of the year.

Ms. Satter reminded the Commissioners that, as they consider the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments, they will need to verify that the following has been considered:

1. All Comprehensive Plan amendments must be reviewed concurrently to assess their cumulative affect on the City and the environment.
2. The Planning Commission may recommend, and the City Council may adopt or adopt with modifications, an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan if:
 - a) There exists an obvious technical error in the pertinent Comprehensive Plan provisions, or
 - b) All the following criteria has been met:
 - 1) The amendment is consistent with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA).
 - 2) The amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan or other goals and policies of the City;
 - 3) The amendment is compatible with existing or planned land uses and the surrounding development pattern.
 - 4) The amendment will not adversely affect the City's ability to provide urban services at the planned level of services and bears a reasonable relationship of benefitting the public health, safety and welfare.

Next, **Ms. Satter** also reviewed the criteria for approval of Zoning Code amendments:

1. The amendment is consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. If the amendment does not conflict with other City, State and Federal codes, regulations and ordinances.

Ms. Satter advised that, in order to complete the Comprehensive Plan amendments by the end of the year, the Zoning Code amendments may be delayed, if appropriate. She explained that, if they find something is hard to implement, staff may recommend the Commission focus on the Comprehensive Plan policies first, and then continue the conversation on Zoning Code amendments later. She announced that the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Docket includes two, city-initiated proposals for the Commission's consideration.

- **Amendment 1 – Housing Displacement Policy.**

Ms. Satter advised that the proposal is to add a housing displacement policy or policies to the City's Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan. For example, the following language might be considered as a starting point for the discussion: *"As Bremerton grows, tenant protections may be needed to help mitigate housing displacement, especially for vulnerable populations. The City should develop and implement housing displacement strategies appropriate to Bremerton."* She added that some supporting Zoning Code amendments may be required to implement this policy, and information will come later for these potential changes, potentially in a separate process for Zoning Code amendments.

Ms. Satter explained that the City has adopted a Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) Program, which includes some displacement regulations. While staff will not be proposing any changes to the MFTE Program, the MFTE regulations are a good example that may be applied to other redevelopment projects through a Zoning Code update. The City's current population is approximately 40,000, and there are currently about 17,000 dwelling units. By 2036, it is anticipated the population will increase by about 13,500 people, which equates to about 6,000 households. By 2050, the plan is for the City's population to increase by 27,000 people or about 12,000 households. As the City's population continues to grow, additional units will be needed, and there are currently a lot of existing older housing. As of 2013, over 50% of the housing was over 60 years old and 77% was over 40 years old. It is anticipated that many of these areas will be redeveloped and people will be displaced. She shared the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Displacement Risk Map, which is based on the prediction

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that, between now and 2050, the central Puget Sound Region (King, Snohomish, Pierce and Kitsap Counties) is expected to grow by 1.8 million residents and 830,000 households. As per the map, displacement is most likely to occur in downtown Bremerton, along the Wheaton Way Corridor and West Bremerton, and Jackson Park. However, she noted that Jackson Park is Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton Housing. While there is older housing in the City, it will likely need to be replaced at some point in the future and people will be displaced as part of any future redevelopment.

Chair Wofford invited public comment regarding Amendment 1, but there was none.

Commissioner Flemister clarified that, at this time, the City does not have a displacement policy in its Comprehensive Plan. **Ms. Satter** said the current Housing Policy talks about how the City wants to have quality housing and how housing should be safe for people, but there is nothing to address displacement when redevelopment occurs. She pointed out that displacement is also directly connected to equity, which is very important to consider. The PSRC is doing a lot of regional work with equity, and the City's intent is to learn from what they do. In 2022, she anticipates a discussion about how the City's Comprehensive Plan can better address equity. As the City is experiencing so much growth, staff believes a first step is to address displacement. The MFTE Program has helped to address displacement by providing those who were displaced with some form of economic benefit and help finding housing. It is staff's belief that having a displacement policy in place is important.

Commissioner Coughlin said he would be interested in learning more about the different options of compensation and resources that would be available. **Ms. Satter** said that compensation and assistance will definitely be part of the future conversation, and staff is currently researching state laws that give guidance. She recalled staff's earlier work on House Bill 1923, and noted that one option to qualify for grant funding from the State was for cities to adopt housing displacement strategies. A lot of work has already been done that the City can learn from, and the intent is for the City stay ahead of the curve.

Vice Chair Tift commented on the vast amount of cleared land, particularly in East Bremerton, that will soon be redeveloped. He voiced concern that, as people move from the older units to the newer developments, the older properties could become blighted and/or abandoned. While displacement has an impact on tenants, there is also some risk for property owners. **Ms. Satter** agreed and noted that a time limit could be included in the housing displacement tool, so it would not apply to properties that haven't been occupied for 2 years, 18 months, etc. Once there is a housing displacement regulation in the code, developers will have a clear understanding of the requirement and can work that into their cost/benefit analysis.

Commissioner Pedersen observed that the housing displacement requirements would increase the cost of redeveloping some properties. He asked if staff has considered a threshold where the requirements would only apply to development over a certain size. While he agreed it is important to have displacement requirements for large developments, he voiced concern about adopting additional restrictions that increase the cost of fixing up small rental properties. He would prefer not to add requirements that impact working families who happen to own an extra home. **Ms. Satter** shared Commissioner Pederson's concern. She noted that when the Rose Court Apartment property (near City Hall) was redeveloped, the tenants in the 10 units each received \$2,800 for relocation assistance. A group of single-family houses near Warren Avenue were replaced with a 30-unit apartment complex, and the people living in the homes received relocation assistance, as well.

Commissioner Rich commented that Amendment 1 prioritizes rent-burdened people, and it would benefit the Commission to hear again exactly what that means and why those people are at the greatest risk. It is important to humanize the people who live in these areas. **Ms. Satter** agreed to provide additional data for the Commission's consideration, including information about the Average Median Income (AMI).

- **Amendment 2 – Charleston Areawide Plan.**

Ms. Satter reviewed that the City completed the Charleston Areawide Planning Study in 2019, which included a market assessment to identify the opportunities and barriers to redevelopment in and around the focus area and a public engagement process to develop a vision and community priorities for the Charleston District Center. She shared a map to illustrate the boundaries of the Charleston District, noting that Callow Avenue is its main spine, with 13th Street as the northern boundary and 1st Street and Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton as the southern boundary. The study identified the following seven items that require Comprehensive Plan amendments:

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- **Amendment 2.1 – Vision.** This amendment would revise the description currently in the Comprehensive Plan for the Charleston District Center Core (DCC) to support the community vision that was developed during the Charleston Areawide Planning Study. As proposed, the vision would read, “*Rediscover Charleston as a distinctively creative historic district that celebrates its eclectic, imaginative, and artisan character through capital investments, local traditions, diverse tenants, and quality housing.*” The vision would also direct that the City and the community could enhance the neighborhood by improving community perceptions of the Charleston District, addressing blight and property maintenance, increasing walkability and pedestrian safety, and addressing vacancies and underutilized properties.
- **Amendment 2.2 – Support Interim Use.** This amendment would add a policy to support interim uses, such as food truck courts or pop-up outdoor markets. Currently, the DCC zone imposes specific site design criteria that are appropriate for permanent structures, but may be problematic for interim/temporary uses that make the area unique. Perhaps the Zoning Code could be relaxed to allow vacant lots and buildings to be more easily activated by temporary uses until properties are redeveloped into permanent uses.
- **Amendment 2.3 – Develop Artisan/Live-Work Overlay.** The areawide planning study recommends the creation of an artisan/live-work overlay district along Wycoff Avenue and the surrounding properties. The overlay area would be between 11th Street and Kitsap Way, in an area of existing homes where there is potential for unique infill development. Given the existing houses, it is not likely the area will be redeveloped as a prime commercial corridor in the near future. For the interim, the idea is to add a policy in the Comprehensive Plan that supports an artisan/live-work overlay. The Zoning Code could then be amended to add regulations that support live-work situations.
- **Amendment 2.4 – Parking Flexibility.** This amendment would add a policy to provide parking flexibility for infill projects. Many of the existing commercial sites in Charleston are small, devoid of on-site parking, and have 100% site coverage. This leaves no opportunity for new on-site parking areas. Although the current code doesn’t require additional on-site parking for existing buildings, any building increase or additional dwelling units would trigger requirements for additional on-site parking. There is some opportunity to add more clarity to the parking standards to allow for minor building expansion without providing additional parking or allowing satellite parking at a further distance, such as the regulations in the Downtown Subarea Plan. The Zoning Code could be amended to add flexibility for properties in close proximity to transit and Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton.
- **Amendment 2.5 – Streetscape Design.** This amendment would add a policy to create a site-specific Streetscape Enhancement Plan for redevelopment in this area. The code requires development to adhere to the plan in place, but there is not a specific plan for the Charleston DCC. The policy could identify that an appropriate streetscape for each of the blocks in the DCC be developed, with a main focus on Callow Avenue, Wycoff Avenue, 6th Street and 11th Street. Though likely not to be specifically developed in this Comprehensive Plan process, it could address wider sidewalks in key areas, multimodal travel lanes, sufficient crosswalks, landscaping/street trees, and street lighting. The areawide plan recommended creating a Callow Avenue Festival Street between 6th and 9th Streets. If this policy is added to the Comprehensive Plan, it would likely get added to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), as well. Staff would have to work with the Public Works Department on an appropriate policy proposal for the Commission’s consideration to help support this effort.
- **Amendment 2.6 – Support Recreational Enhancements.** This amendment would add a policy to support and develop a gathering place in the Charleston DCC. The Comprehensive Plan doesn’t need to be specific, but the areawide plan provides some recommendations for potential improvements. Implementing the policy would take coordination with the Parks Department and Public Works Department. Examples were provided to illustrate potential opportunities outlined in the areawide plan for creating gathering spaces in the area (Charleston Triangle Pocket Park, Forest Edge, Artist Tunnel in Wycoff Underpass, Bremerton Gateway Entrance, and Forest Urban Trail from Callow to Forest Ridge Park). Once the policy has been added, the Parks and Public Works Department will be asked to research opportunities for implementation and what is most appropriate for City.
- **Amendment 2.7 – Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Additions.** The CIP is part of the Comprehensive Plan. It is a multi-year plan that provides a scheduled and programmatic approach to utilize the City’s financial resources in the most efficient manner to meet service and infrastructure needs. If the Comprehensive Plan is amended as proposed,

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items will need to be added to the CIP to implement the new policies such as streetscape design and implementation, gateway enhancements, park enhancements, and miscellaneous public utilities that support the adaptive reuse and infill projects.

Ms. Satter said other important items in the Charleston Areawide Plan that may or may not require Comprehensive Plan amendments include:

- Proactively market opportunity sites for infill opportunities and adaptive reuse projects. This could include creating information/fact sheets for each opportunity site.
- Support community stewardship and governance in Charleston. The Downtown and Manette Business Associations and grass root neighborhood groups, such as Union Hill, are good examples.
- Develop a formal district brand that builds upon the community's vision and markets the neighborhood to both Citywide and regional audiences. The neighborhood/business association should develop this unique brand. Once developed, the City could aid and recognize the brand through technical support, policy documents and long-range planning.

Ms. Satter invited the Commissioners to identify additional information they want staff to provide prior to the next workshop discussion on the two proposed amendments. She encouraged them to review the Charleston Areawide Plan and notify staff of anything identified in that Plan was missing.

Chair Wofford invited public comment on the Charleston Areawide Plan.

Edward Coviello, Kitsap Transit, advised that Kitsap Transit has purchased the old Gateway Shopping Center, which is currently being used as a park-and-ride. They are still debating internally about the long-range plan for the parcel. In the meantime, they have received a Federal Grant to do a transit-oriented development study to study how the site could be developed. It is anticipated the study will get started this summer. He said Kitsap Transit sees a lot of potential for the property going forward, and they believe that the Charleston Areawide Plan provides a lot of flexibility that will attract further investment.

Commissioner Pedersen said he supports creating a community gathering place at the Triangle Park between Wycoff Avenue and Kitsap Way. Currently, this seems like wasted space, and he felt it would be heavily used if some improvements were made. **Ms. Satter** suggested that staff could send mailers to property owners within the Charleston area, inviting them to participate in future workshops to provide additional feedback, particularly on ideas for gathering places. At their next workshop, she would provide feedback from the other City Departments regarding potential options for gathering places, as well.

Commissioner Coughlin referred to Amendment 2.4 and said he supports allowing more flexibility in the parking requirements, particularly if the goal is to make the area more walkable and pedestrian-friendly. Given the comment from Mr. Coviello from Kitsap Transit, he suggested it would be helpful to learn more about how the greater public transportation system ties into the Charleston area and connects to other areas of the City, as well as how routes might be changed to make Charleston more accessible. **Ms. Satter** agreed to work with Kitsap Transit to learn more about their plans.

Vice Chair Tift observed that there is a tremendous and unmet demand for public parking. He asked if there is a place in Charleston that might work for a public parking facility. He noted that thousands of people with living wages are looking for places to spend their money on the way home. He suggested the City work with Kitsap Transit to identify locations for more park-and-ride facilities to provide better access for the local workforce that has the financial means to support the small businesses in the area. He noted that the Gateway Center is a good example of a park-and-ride lot that works well. Perhaps there are other opportunities in the Charleston area, as well. **Ms. Satter** agreed that public parking opportunities must be considered given the areas proximity to Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton.

Commissioner Flemister asked if streetscape improvements would be the monetary responsibility of the property owner. **Ms. Satter** answered that, as per the current code, frontage improvements are required when properties are either vacant with a new development or significantly improved. The property owner would be required to either do the frontage improvements as part of development or agree to do them at some point in the future. She agreed to provide more specific information about when the frontage improvement requirement would be triggered so the Commission could have a more comprehensive conversation

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about what extent for streetscape development is appropriate in the Charleston area, but that this is already an existing requirement.

Commissioner Pedersen voiced support for removing the parking requirements for properties on Callow Avenue (Amendment 2.4).

Chair Wofford indicated support for creating an artisan/live-work overlay (Amendment 2.3). He shared the example of the Old Rainier Brewer Building in Seattle, which was converted into studio space that is very popular. He expressed his belief that there is a pent-up demand for this type of space that would draw people from Seattle to the Charleston area. **Vice Chair Tift** also provided the example of the Bainbridge BARN as a successful community space.

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Report

Chair Wofford did not have any items to report.

Director Report

Ms. Satter reported that the Planning Commission's recommendation to allow two Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on single-family lots, with an additional parking space required, was presented to the City Council. She recalled that a number of other amendments were also considered, including eliminating the parking requirement, prohibiting short-term rentals, limiting it to areas that are within 500 feet of a center and adding an affordability component. The City Council decided against recommending the affordability component, as the Revised Code of Washington requires that in the affordability component be in place for 50 years and that would result in this code not being implemented; but recognizes that the City still needs more affordable housing options through different code updates. On March 3rd, the City Council voted to support the Planning Commission's recommendation as presented. The result is that two ADUs will be allowed, but the second ADU must provide the additional parking space. She advised that staff would provide periodic updates to the Commission as to how many ADUs are being constructed, and particularly two ADUS on a single parcel. If issues of concern arise, staff will come back with amendments as appropriate. Staff believes this will be a very successful approach for addressing the housing shortage in Bremerton.

Ms. Satter also reported that there is still a lot of development activity in Bremerton right now. About 1,200 units have been constructed in the last five years and another 2,000 are in the pipeline. However, this still isn't sufficient to meet the City's goal of 500 units per year. The amendment to the ADU provisions is a positive change, and staff will present additional ideas in the future.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business


There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

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Respectively Submitted by:



Andrea L. Spencer, AICP
Executive Secretary



Nick Wofford, Chair
Planning Commission

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