

PSC Retreat

July 23, 2019 | 1-5 p.m.

BES Water Pollution Control Lab, Bybee Room: 6543 N Burlington Ave, Portland 97203

Commissioners Present: Jeff Bachrach, Ben Bortolazzo, Mike Houck, Katie Larsell, Akasha Lawrence Spence, Oriana Magnera, Daisy Quiñonez (by phone at 3:05 p.m.), Steph Routh, Katherine Schultz (left at 3:30 p.m.), Chris Smith, Eli Spevak

City Staff Presenting: Andrea Durbin, Joe Zehnder, Eric Engstrom, Sandra Wood, Donnie Oliveira, Nikoyia Phillips, Ryan Curren, Julie Ocken; Sam Diaz (Mayor's office)

Documents and Presentations for today's meeting

Welcome

Andrea welcomed the group and shared the purpose of today's meeting:

- Get to know each other better
- Better understand personal interests and goals
- Discussion about why and how the City is centering racial equity

Introductions

Staff briefly introduced themselves.

Julie walked through the BPS Ground Rules.

1. Listen to understand, not to respond.
2. WAIT.
3. Assume good intentions, but attend to impact.
4. Be willing to make mistakes and be forgiving for those who do.
5. Allow for, and appreciate, disagreement of opinions, ideas, methods – respectfully.
6. Personal stories stay, lessons can be shared.

Commissioners introduced themselves and shared “something that you're reading or a podcast you're currently listening to.”

PSC members also shared their goals, outside interests, and thoughts about their work with the Commission.

Commissioner Magnera: I'm driven by justice. Experience as a community organizer. Understanding historical harms and acts and fighting for justice is what I'm excited to be bringing to the Commission.

Chair Schultz: Original goal was, as an architect, to affect the zoning code in a technical manner. But the role on the PSC is so much bigger and personally fulfilling as I've been on the commission for a few years. The thoughtful discussions have broadened my thinking and horizons and how we are affecting our community. Outside of work, I love to read and cook.

Commissioner Houck: I was on the Sustainable Development Commission and when Susan Anderson asked who on the Commission was willing to serve on the new combined Commission I was the only one to raise their hand. In testifying before the Planning Commission in the 1980s, it became clear that virtually no attention was paid to natural resources. I had been told by local planners there was “no room for nature in the city” that nature was outside the Urban Growth Boundary. My interest is ensuring everyone has access to nature which is of importance to human health, physical and mental. I also believe we need to protect nature for its intrinsic value, for its own sake without regard to its values to us.

Commissioner Smith: My lens originally was how we make Portland the example of a good city, particularly around transportation. Serving on the Commission was really an education for me and how we can improve the system equitably. My major project is a small non-profit called Portland Transport, which does Portland arrival displays. I’m now the longest-serving Commissioner, and I’m delighted that I’m no longer the only daily cyclist as I was at the start of the PSC.

Commissioner Routh: I grew up in East Portland before it was annexed. Infrastructural barriers are just the start to other barriers. I want to work on how our conversations can build trust for people living here. Outside interests include biking... and eating cheese.

Commissioner Spevak: I came to the PSC looking at the Zoning Code and a focus to foster more climate-friendly building in the city. I like the functionality of the PSC. It is well-run with staff support and leadership. People are interested in long-term leadership as part of a functional group. My interests have expanded beyond housing to make the city more equitable and sustainable. I’ve become more interested in transportation as a more nimble way to address climate issues. I’m also interested in energy policy and behavior change. I’ve recently picked up the cello again and have kids who are old enough to backpack with now.

Commissioner Bachrach: I have lots of experience working with the Zoning Code as well as with affordable housing work. As Oriana said she’s a trouble-maker, I’ll join her as the contrarian.

Commissioner Lawrence Spence: I started the end of 2017 with the question “who gets to decide?” That helped me focus on both myself and my work in the built environment. Something I hope we can do is to create the civic-private-public partnership where everyone has an equal opportunity in decision-making and there’s visibility, so people understand what we’re talking about. Make everything we talk about accessible to the majority of people. My other interests are being a new cyclist, and this is the year I’m going to learn to swim.

Commissioner Bortolazzo: I consider myself an observer of cities... seeing how they evolve and how they’re like a living organism. I joined the PSC to be able to shape the code itself with a design perspective as an end-user. As far as other interests, I bike commute and anything outdoors-related.

Commissioner Larsell: East Portland Action Plan is why I started on the PSC. One of the goals of that work is to have people represent East Portland and bring it to the conversation. The motivation is my neighborhood connection to East Portland. We are aiming to make sure our community becomes better

and more just. How to be a spiritual person in the modern world while respecting science is important to me. I like to kayak and go on road trips with my husband.

Administration

Julie provided a review of the projects the PSC has seen since its last retreat in September 2017. There have been numerous housing and transportation projects as well as code and other work brought before the PSC.

- *Commissioner Houck*: One of the reasons I was very interested in serving on the PSC was to talk about broader sustainability issues. We had a robust conversation about the PSC being proactive and engaging in advocacy, and I'd like to see what current commissioners' opinions about proactive action and our role as advocates.
- *Commissioner Spevak*: After an item goes to Council, it would be great to have a recap come back to us about what Council may have changed in their decisions. It would be good to get this feedback as Commission members.
- *Commissioner Bachrach*: It would be good to hear not just what City Council changed, but what about their feedback and any advice they have for the PSC.
- *Commissioner Larsell*: Having buy-in from elected can really make something successful, and I'm wondering how that could work, particularly at the beginning of a plan where it can make such a difference in the process.

Sandra walked through the upcoming legislative projects for the next 1.5 years to give the Commissioners a sense of what's coming up on the PSC agendas. There are a number of projects related to design, housing, and environmental work.

- *Commissioner Bachrach*: How did projects 13-20 come to the list as opposed to other projects? What's the opportunity for the PSC to prioritize what we see?

Joe: Items 13, 19, and 20 are continuing work on the SW Corridor Project and Equitable Development, at \$2B regional project.

Eric: Projects get on this list in a few ways... some are grant-funded; some are regional in nature that we respond to; some come from the annual budget process that Council decides; some come out of the BPS strategic plan. So there are different decision points.

- *Commissioner Smith*: Clearly some of these are responding to external events. The part I'm interested in focusing on is the bureau workplan or strategic plan. Some of us want to help shape and drive that more than we have in the past. I'd also note that 20 of the 21 items are planning projects, and we want to be more aware of sustainability projects in the bureau.
- *Commissioner Spevak*: It's not clear when a project is not land-use how or if they come to the PSC. I'd like to see other sustainability projects, or at least updates about them, come to us too.

Sandra: For things that affect the Zoning Code, those projects must come to the PSC, Design Commission, and/or Historic Landmarks Commission. Title 11 (Trees) also must come to the PSC (as well as the Urban Forestry Commission). State law also mandates projects that must come to the PSC. What's not written anywhere is about sustainability projects; transportation projects after they've been put on

the list when they're actually getting built. Occasionally we will bring things to the PSC as informational and because Council appreciates the PSC's input. Some of the briefings are so PSC members have background on projects that are implementing part of the Comp Plan.

Donnie talked about responding to questions from the media and how PSC members can handle those calls. BPS staff is available to respond instead of you as Commission members. If a member of the media is reaching out to you, they are likely reaching out to a number of PSC members. We want to be sure there is a consistent message from the Commission and that BPS is in the loop as well. Feel free to contact me, Eden Dabbs, or Sandra before responding.

- *Commissioner Smith:* We have agreed that only the Chair speaks to the media. A number of us are advocates outside the PSC, and/but when we talk with the media, that line can be blurry as to what role we're speaking from.

Donnie: Also for consideration, you can begin to think about how can we elevate the voice of the PSC. What would it look like for the PSC to be present in other spaces?

FY19-20 Council calendar

Joe walked through the [Housing Opportunity Initiative \(HOI\) timeline](#) and the process for the housing projects going to Council. We've combined Residential Infill Project and Better Housing by Design with a new project, the Anti-Displacement Action Plan, to create this HOI project to go to Council together. Our objective is to get the two zoning projects through Council by the end of the calendar year.

The PSC will have a more in-depth briefing on August 27, followed by the work session at Council on September 10, where we'd like a PSC member to join us. The Anti-Displacement Plan work was just funded starting this FY, and part of its origins are from the ADPDX group have been doing together with PolicyLink around exploring and learning how cities that are committed to anti-displacement policy can do that work. The August 27 briefing is even before the project is scoped, so it is an opening discussion. It also gives time to the newer Commissioners about the projects the PSC has recently seen and is something of a preview of the presentation to Council.

Understanding what we were wrestling with on RIP as a connection and the PSC's lens is important for this work. As is the point of view of renters and other households that are affected by displacement.

Commissioner Magnera: Will someone from ADPDX be part of the briefing?

- Joe: The plan is yes.

For the task force, I would have concern with a PSC member on that since we already have a platform. I think the PSC could speak to the task force, but that should be for the community to have a voice instead of the PSC taking space there.

Sandra noted the back side of the sheet, which is a crosswalk of HB2001 and SB534 to the Residential Infill Project and gave a quick review and summary.

What Does Leading with Racial Equity Look Like?

Nikoyia and Ryan introduced themselves and the discussion topic for today on the [Leading for Racial Equity handout](#).

- Explore how the PSC can use your platform to advance racial equity.
- Policies we have in place that are designed to help us move forward.
- Relationship to community and equitable growth.

Ryan highlighted the rationale for why we lead with racial equity.

Commissioner Houck: I'm not challenging leading with racial equity at all. I was interested that you reference class as also being important. There are folks out there as white and poor who also see themselves being left behind, so I'm glad you're recognizing that.

Commissioner Quiñonez joined by phone.

Commissioner Smith commented that our policies talk about disability as well as race. The disability community shared their voices loudly with us and asked about being left behind.

Commissioner Lawrence Spence: Part of this is that Black indigenous people in their communities have poor and disabled people in their community. Racial equity is about something different than thinking about just poverty; racism affects you no matter where you are. This is an all-encompassing component.

Ryan: As leaders, holding the space and discomfort and looking at where the greatest disparities are is something that will help greatly.

The Commission discussed the Table of Competencies and how the PSC can use its position and platform to advance racial equity.

Small group discussion and share-out:

- Everything has a racial equity element, whether or not there is a specificity within a code or what we're recommending to Council. We must understand historical roots of inequities such as redlining in Portland. Think about our own values and biases and how they influence our recommendation or decision.
- PSC has a role to signal to the public what's important. If racial justice is the highest level, we need to be signaling that all the time. Sometimes people share weird things in public comment, so where is the line of what we allow and when we cut people off? How do you call that out?
- Race and class are very different, and the Zoning Code interfaces more with class, so that's a struggle: how do you use that toolbox without excluding people? History of planning in Portland: planning decisions have intentionally been racist in the past.
- Learning and growing in this space is important as we work together on the Commission. We're all learning together. It's important that all PSC members can share our opinions together as a group. Those of us who have racial privilege need to acknowledge that as we engage. Education and sharing the information is important.

Ryan and Nikoyia continued on the second side of the document with highlighting the Comp Plan equity principle, Comp Plan equity policies, and new approaches to intentionally engage under-served and under-represented populations in decisions that affect them.

Chapter 2 (Community Engagement) of the Comp Plan includes policies for accountability, but it is missing the “how”. This is where Nikoyia needs the PSC’s support: what does that look like? The policies are not a substitute for analytical thinking or storytelling or creating space for those who may otherwise never be heard.

The Community Involvement Committee (CIC) includes 11 members who will represent multiple Portland communities. We’re in the midst of a recruitment, so if you have thoughts about people who may be interested to engage, that could be a good fit. This group works on the process of how projects engage specific communities on projects as well as some content elements, though that’s more in the PSC realm. Also, in terms of the CIC-PSC relationship, we should look more closely at the relationship. It would be great for the PSC to have trust in the CIC and a reciprocal relationship. We will share more information about the CIC with PSC members, and Nikoyia is available for further questions.

Commissioner Smith: The CIC had a predecessor committee during the Comp Plan process that I’m very respectful of. I’m hopeful the new CIC will grow into this role. As for the Chapter 2 question, there is the conversation at Council about Neighborhood Associations (NAs) currently going on. The best NAs are partners in how we make policies work in their areas; the “worst” NAs are interested in the status quo, which we know is unequitable. I just want to put that into context here.

Commissioner Routh: When we have conversations about race, it can feel uncomfortable. We live in a society that is gaslighting around race. So when people are willing to be uncomfortable in these discussions, I have so much gratitude to everyone in the room.

Lots of what we’ll see is about being honest and burdens. This can be difficult, but it makes for better decisions and outcomes.

PSC Role

General questions for discussion and input:

- What have you observed/heard about the PSC’s work that you’d like to discuss?
- How do we make the PSC more accessible to the public and engage the public more?
- What does success look like for the Commission? When do you know you’ve done a good job? When you’ve made small steps or bold moves?
- Do you have any feedback for staff? How has staff been doing with presenting information to the PSC?

Commissioner Houck: When we talk about advocacy and being more proactive, one of the concerns is that our agenda is usually packed. My feeling is that we should look beyond our meetings to create opportunity as a commission to explore issues, particularly related to climate change and preparation and talk about intersectionality. Impact of urban heat island on the environment and people is an example. I’m personally interested in this conversation, not just about mitigation, but more so about

adaptation. For example, PSU's Vivek Shandas has mapped Portland for urban heat island and not surprisingly some of the worst impacts are likely to be on communities of color and low income communities. I'd like us to work with PSU's Institute for Sustainable Solutions to explore how we implement our Climate Preparation Strategies to address urban heat island and expanding the city's urban forest canopy.

Commissioner Magnera: How can we give community opportunity to bring issues to the Commission or give input about what we can do for under-served populations? Every policy that comes to the PSC should come with an equity and/or displacement analysis. I'd like to see more creative ways for people to give input and testimony... e.g. listening sessions. Are there opportunities to partner with community organizations to do video testimony? Could we have an education session each quarter for community to get caught up to the work we're going to be hearing? This could be a chance for community to engage with PSC members as well. It's important to me to acknowledge the land we're on, maybe to work with an indigenous group to make it meaningful.

- Donnie: One of our BPS colleagues is working on this with the City Tribal Relations representative on this work.

Commissioner Spevak: Invited testimony and providing options such as childcare is one way we can help make meetings more accessible. I like the idea of giving other Commissioners practice of running meetings to get experience doing it.

Commissioner Lawrence Spence: Increasing the visibility of the issues that come before us is important. Providing background, implications, accessing CBOs and trusted partners can help with that. Moving away from CBOs also can work: they already have their communities they reach, so bringing new people into the conversation and increasing visibility is important. Having our meetings in other locations is another option. Infographics or other ways to show data or information to simplify the work makes it more accessible as well.

Commissioner Larsell: I like having the meetings in East Portland. They have a completely different feel to them. I'd like to see more explanation of the studies that get done so they are accessible to everyone.

Commissioner Spevak: sometimes the implementation of the code relies heavily on other bureaus, so I am thinking more expansively on the role the PSC could have (e.g. with PBOT or PHB projects) to make sure the outcome aligns with the Comp Plan, and because those bureaus don't have another commission between staff and Council. Maybe we have an opportunity at the PSC to get public input but that it's clear we're not responsible for providing a full recommendation to Council.

Commissioner Bortolazzo: PSC's role is to shepherd change, which we do on a regular basis. We can continue to challenge traditional ways of looking at zoning. More broadly, I'd like to look at what's being done in other places before embarking on large projects.

- *Commissioner Houck:* PSU is a great resource right here that can help with bringing in external experts to help inform us, the public, and staff.

Commissioner Routh: There are a number of communities here that have done their own planning. How can we be involved and support and bring that into other city planning processes?

Commissioner Quiñonez: How do we go about setting agendas to spend more time to push some bolder policies to push equity and sustainability work forward?

Donnie: As you set your agenda, you basically are determining who will show up. We do already have a packed agenda, but how do we ensure the space for people to actually participate?

Andrea: We're also having a conversation if there is a larger role that the PSC can play in the bureau's Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) to create a place for community members to come could be a way to help us connect some of the dots a bit more. It would also help us make the case with City Council about priorities for BPS.

- *Commissioner Spevak:* I like this idea and generally agree with it. There are other voices that are important to have in these conversations as well.

Sometimes the "how" has a huge impact on the "what" in terms of what parts of the Zoning Code actually get used. Maybe we do need to get into the how with other bureaus' projects more.

Commissioner Bachrach: If all these ideas get implemented, we're seeing a very different function for this commission... almost like a "sub City Council" instead of just focusing on the Zoning Code. There is only so much staff and time to do this, and some judgements will be made at the bureau level. We've made important changes to the code, and I don't want to lose that continuing opportunity.

Andrea: It's about being clear at the beginning of our work and knowing who's impacted.

Joe: The power of the PSC is delegated by City Council. This can be helpful, but some of the bureau implementing tools get into a different layer of politics. We have to pay attention to both to have the influence we all want to have.

Donnie: It's a yes, and. The expectation should be that when code comes to the PSC, it's built on rigor and broad input. Your stewardship is to ensure you're overseeing the code and implementing it well in the community for what we're trying to accomplish.

Andrea: I would like to recommend we form a subgroup of how to change the way we're working in terms of making the PSC more accessible to community; what's the role of the PSC and CIC; educational opportunities. We started a good conversation today, and I don't want to lose that. Commissioners Lawrence Spence, Quiñonez, Magnera, Routh, and Spevak will participate.

We may also be looking for a PSC member to be a representative on the CIC.

We talked a lot about agenda-setting, which we'll continue to think about, as well as the role for the PSC and BAC. We'll be asking Michele Crim to share more about sustainability priorities and work.

This was a good start to discussing our racial equity work and priorities. There will be training at the August 13 and continued conversations in our work, particularly with DOZA and working with the Design

Commission. The more we can have these learning conversations where we're attending to impact as well is important.

Commissioner Magnera: I used to send around an article related to racial equity each month at the organization I was at. I can look to send this (via Julie) to help with some of the learning in this space.

Commissioner Spevak: I think it might be nice if people are interested to share phone numbers to talk outside of meetings... complying to public records law of course.

Adjourn