

## **Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission**

May 25, 2021

5:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

**PSC Commissioners Present:** Jeff Bachrach, Ben Bortolazzo, Jessica Gittemeier, Katie Larsell, Oriana Magnera, Valeria McWilliams, Steph Routh, Chris Smith, Eli Spevak

**PSC Members Absent:** Mike Houck, Katherine Schultz

**City Staff Presenting:** Rachel Hoy, Christine Leon (PBOT), Matthew Berkow (PBOT)

**Guests Presenting:** Winta Yohannes and Janet Bebb

### Documents and Presentations for today's meeting

*Chair Spevak* called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

*Chair Spevak:* In keeping with the Oregon Public Meetings law, Statutory land use hearing requirements, and Title 33 of the Portland City Code, the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission is holding this meeting virtually.

- All members of the PSC are attending remotely, and the City has made several avenues available for the public to watch the broadcast of this meeting.
- The PSC is taking these steps as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to limit in-person contact and promote social distancing. The pandemic is an emergency that threatens the public health, safety and welfare which requires us to meet remotely by electronic communications.
- Thank you all for your patience, humor, flexibility and understanding as we manage through this difficult situation to do the City's business.

### **Items of Interest from Commissioners**

*Commissioner Smith:* One piece of unfinished business I want to address before I step down relates to the SW Corridor Project and West Portland Town Center, which I have been the representative of this body to. I didn't expect when I started that we would still be talking about whether there will be light rail in the SW Corridor but with the failure of the bond measure last fall it looks like that's where we are. I'm glad that Oriana can continue to be our voice as those projects moving forward. You'll likely be seeing zoning changes for WPTC in the coming months, but it's important to remember that the transportation and land use components need to be linked. This is an area with deficiencies in bike/ped/transit access and the zoning changes need to be tied to transportation improvements. I also have concerns about funding for affordable housing in this area – initially there was a plan to establish a fund for land banking along the corridor, but funding has failed to materialize.

And there will still be a need to coordinate all of the infrastructure bureaus. BPS is in a good spot to help with that. The SW Corridor light rail may be on the back burner for now, but long term this is an area that we need to keep an eye on.

*Commissioner Magnera:* Thanks for your service on that project, Chris. I'm excited to continue to represent and support this work.

*Commissioner Bachrach:* Thanks to my fellow commissioners who supported my re-appointment to the PSC.

## **Director's Report**

Eric Engstrom

- Thanks again to Chris for all your years of service on this Commission.
- We've moved the WPTC briefing out a few months, mostly to accommodate continued conversations about the infrastructure coordination. But it will be coming later this year.
- Council held a hearing on DOZA on May 12. About 50 people testified in person and over 200 pieces of written testimony were submitted. The top two issues are the 55/75-foot height thresholds to trigger of Design Review and the discussion about which types of affordable housing projects can use the Type II procedure
- Shelter to Housing Continuum was adopted April 28 and no appeals have been filed as yet. We are now working with Multnomah County to get it adopted at the county level
- At our next meeting, we'll be welcoming our new commissioners: Jonell Bell, Gabe Shoeships, and Erica Thompson

## **Consent Agenda**

Consideration of Minutes from the February 23, 2021 PSC meeting

*Commissioner Smith* moved to adopt the minutes and *Commissioner Larsell* seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Albina Vision**

Briefing: Winta Yohannes and Janet Bebb

### Presentation

The project is to transform the 94 acres of the Lower Albina area of the Central City. Our work seeks to take the lessons learned from that area's history to chart a new path forward. Winta gave an overview of the history of the Albina area and its role as the heart of Portland's African-American community, which was centered there because of redlining and other racist public policy decisions. The Albina Vision Team began meeting 6 years to create a set of values to drive future redevelopment of this area. Core Vision Values:

- Honor what was, what happened, and what could be
- Heal ourselves and our communities
- Reconnect to the river
- Build a place to live, work, and play
- Integrate arts in the process and product
- Be intentionally remarkable

Janet Bebb talked about the AVT project team, which was established with the intention of mixing local talent with nationally recognized talent and also a focus on black talent.

Currently ATV has been sponsoring a series of workshops to ask people what is important to them, which has been a dynamic process of listening and organizing what's been heard. Some of the highlights include:

- Create a strong sense of belonging
- Include a rich variety of public spaces
- Create opportunities for wealth building in the black community
- Access to nature
- Shared social support

This has led to some work that starts to look like architecture and urban design through the creation of the "hub" concept that starts to distill some of what has been heard in the workshops. While this starts to look like architecture and urban design, the idea is to center the values identified above and also to center the creation of black wealth rather than the idea of economic returns to developers. Through this, the ATV has created some different scenarios at different levels of density to visualize the possibilities. These concepts are a jumping off point for future workshops.

### **Discussion**

*Chair Spevak* I noticed that this discussion doesn't mention anything about the highway cutting through this area and the large ODOT project planned there. If there are no changes to I-5, does this project continue to move forward?

*Yohannes:* For our scenarios, we're looking at different options with and without the highway covers we've been advocating for. The important thing to note, however, is that the Albina Vision can continue with or without that. I think the freeway raises more of a moral question of how the City deals with this gash through the Central City.

*Commissioner Magnera:* I'm curious if you have any idea on what you would like to see this body advocating for and ways to support participatory data gathering and planning approaches so we can support processes that are community led.

*Yohannes:* I would recommend to the City that this model has worked really well. We'd love to be invited back later this summer to share our scenarios and concepts that could inform Central City planning through our work.

*Commissioner Bortolazzo:* I really like this idea of leading with wealth building and to help create some amends for the wrongdoing of the past. I see a lot of potential there. I just have words of encouragement.

*Commissioner Smith:* I want to mention that when you get further along with this project you'll need to be considering the City's policies for the Central City. If there are conflicts with your proposals and those policies I encourage you to come talk to us. Also, for the medium density scenario, there is a current project in the legislature that would make it easier for fee-simple ownership of some of those proposed development ideas. I will also mention the ODOT process and the independent analysis of the freeway covers. There are some really intriguing ideas about the possibilities of moving those freeway ramps, but I'm a little concerned that there is no one from the City involved with the discussion of the covers now

that we've walked away from the ODOT process and the cover analysis is being done independently. So, my question is if you have advice about the City's involvement with that process.

*Yohannes:* I agree that those concepts are really good and they will be presented to ODOT in the near future, so I could see a role for the City in advocating for some of those concepts that include more developable freeway covers, including any changes to the proposed ramps that may entail.

*Commissioner Bachrach:* Of the 94 acres, how much is in public ownership?

*Yohannes:* There are 10 or 12 property owners in the district, with the majority owners being the City, PPS, and Vulcan. Currently, a lot of the area is currently parking lots and rail/utility/transit infrastructure.

*Commissioner Bachrach:* So, is the idea that the Blanchard Building (PPS) would be gone?

*Yohannes:* Our hope is that we would work with PPS to think about what the long-term ideas for that site. Today PPS is signing an agreement that allows AVT first-right-of-refusal for the site.

*Commissioner Bachrach:* Do you have folks on your team with experience with master planning for large sites and urban design, and if not, are there plans to bring some of those folks on board in the future?

*Yohannes:* We do have folks on our team that brings that perspective, but we've also convened a development advisory group to help bring outside perspective to the project.

*Commissioner McWilliams:* I just want to say great presentation and I'm pleased to see the lease-to-own model included in some of the scenarios.

## **Streets 2035**

Briefing: Christine Leon, Mathew Berkow (PBOT)

### Presentation

*Christine Leon* This is a project to help define and shape the City's use of the right-of-way, and since there is a hodgepodge of policies and interests in the ROW, we are looking to find use ways to balance those. We are not creating new policies, rather, we are creating a framework for balancing the existing policies to create better outcomes through timely decision making with consistency that leads to safe outcomes. We're hoping to address ROW use systematically.

*Mathew Berkow* presented the Streets 2035 project, which is being led by the PBOT Capital Projects Group and the Planning section. First off, why do we need this project? Because the Comprehensive Plan establishes that the public right-of-way (ROW) provides a range of uses and public services, including multi-modal transportation, public and private utilities, street trees and tree canopy, active uses of the streets. This programming gets complicated by the fact that there are often constraints on the amount of ROW available for these uses, leading to competing needs and the need for tradeoffs.

### Project Approach

- Phase 1: Existing Conditions
  - What are the existing conditions in the ROW?

- What are the issues we encounter in the ROW?
- Establishing context – street types
- Phase 2: ROW policy reconciliation
- Phase 3: Outcomes and final products

Project Objectives: Aims to develop context-sensitive decision-making framework that guides space allocation to:

- Better achieve citywide and individual bureau goals
- Reduce situations that require individual interpretation and negotiation
- Increase certainty and clarity for people wanting to develop adjacent to ROW
- Create a consistent starting point for capital projects

These decisions are being made today, but the goal here is to come up with a consistent framework for decision making. The project will be ongoing into 2022.

### **Discussion**

*Commissioner Magnera* asked why existing advisory bodies are being prioritized for community engagement over a deeper community engagement?

*Berkow*: That's a good question. I think how we landed on the community engagement strategy we've been using is that we're looking at existing policies and practices and trying to clean up those processes and we're not creating any new policy. We were trying to use the existing advisory bodies for those processes.

*Commissioner McWilliams* asked if there has been discussion about anti-displacement planning considering that the improvements that this project could lead to increased property values and checking in with the Anti-Displacement Committee?

*Berkow*: That is a good point and we should be checking in with them.

*Commissioner Smith* wanted to tag onto Oriana's comment about deeper community engagement and recommended asking the CIC more about that since they are the keepers of the best practices for engagement.

*Commissioner Spevak*: I'm glad this project is happening but I also am wondering about where the community comes into play. We've overprogrammed the ROW so when making decisions about how to use it, there's going to be winners and losers. And in that sense, we are effectively making policy. I'd be concerned if these calls are being made by technical advisory committees or staff when those tradeoffs should be made with the community. So, I guess I'll leave it with the question of who makes the decisions about those tradeoffs.

*Christine Leon* responded that this is a great question and part of why we're here doing this project. PBOT has taken on the role of the steward of the ROW, and we tend to assert our authority in that place. Those decisions about tradeoffs are being made today. There are different paths for engagement now, whether through the development review process or the capital projects process, but part of the reason we're doing this project is so that we're making better-informed decisions in the future.

*Commissioner Magnera:* I want to amplify Eli's point that even if this project isn't necessarily about setting policy or actual capital improvements, it is still deciding outcomes and, in a sense, setting policy. I also want to point out that the Albina Vision project gave us an example of a participatory approach that could be learned from here.

*Commissioner McWilliams* I'm wondering about budgets and ROW acquisition and how the City is spending that funding.

*Berkow:* Typically, ROW is acquired through development dedication rather than the City purchasing the ROW.

*Chair Spevak:* Asked if there is more of a role for the PSC and BPS to be involved beyond and a briefing and also to introduce you to the CIC.

*Christine Leon:* I know the CIC is an advisory body to BPS so we can reach out to them. And to clarify, we don't have any specific projects, it's really a framework for being more effective in our decision-making. And we really appreciate all of your feedback.

## **Adjourn**

*Commissioner Spevak:* Adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Submitted by JP McNeil