

# Portland Planning Commission

April 11, 2023

## Commissioners Present

Michael Alexander, Wade Lange, Mary-Rain O'Meara, Nikesh Patel, Michael Pouncil, Steph Routh, Eli Spevak

## Commissioners Absent

Erica Thompson

## City Staff

Patricia Diefenderfer, Sandra Wood, JP McNeil, Phil Nameny, Brandon Spencer-Hartle, Bill Cunningham, Cassie Ballew

## [Documents and Presentations for today's meeting](#)

*Chair O'Meara* called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m. and provided an overview of the agenda.

## Items of Interest from Commissioners

none.

## Director's Report

none.

## Consent Agenda

- Consideration of minutes from the March 28, 2023 Planning Commission meeting.

*Commissioner Routh* moved to adopt the Consent Agenda. *Commissioner Alexander* seconded.

Y7 (Alexander, Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak)

The Consent Agenda was adopted.

## Parking Compliance Amendments Project

Hearing: JP McNeil, Sandra Wood

## [Presentation](#)

*Chair O'Meara*: Today we have the public hearing for the Parking Compliance Amendments Projects.

JP provided a reminder/overview of the Parking Compliance Amendments Project. There are three main components of the proposal:

1. Remove minimum parking requirements citywide
2. Update and simplify parking maximums
3. Add new development standards for large parking lots

These are to conform to the state's Climate Friendly Rules.

We have received [12 pieces of written testimony](#) and have two people registered to testify today.

*Commissioner Pouncil:* In the Cully neighborhood where there are large lots and no sidewalks. With new construction in these types of areas, do developers have to place sidewalks?

- JP: There is not a mechanism to put in sidewalks unless they are adjacent to the property. Developers can and do often put in parking if it's needed.
- Sandra: When a development proposal comes in, there is a public works permit as well as the building permit. Typically rules for PBOT is that a sidewalk be built, or the developer can pay into the LTIC fund, which is generally an exception. But this project doesn't discuss this at all.
- *Commissioner Spevak:* The LTIC is only for 6 units or less.

### Testimony

1. Tony Jordan: First comments to the PSC was when we were instituting parking, and I'm happy to support this new project to remove and simplify parking minimums. The mandates don't do much because most of the city is already exempt or this doesn't apply. Other cities look to Portland as examples, and they copy us. People think of Portland as a leader in planning, so it's great we're simplifying the code. There will be a remaining issue with existing conditional use locations though.
2. Patty Nelson: Parking is an important issue for both climate and livability. I want to speak on behalf of what's required – that is to meet state requirements, which doesn't include mandating removing minimums. I'd like to see where our existing code does not meet the requirements in options 2 and 3, which is allowed by the state. Residential Infill already modified parking code significantly. This project will eliminate all parking requirements, but I think it's a bigger issue than, for example, being close to frequent transit. Transit was developed differently in different part of the city. In close-in neighborhoods, we don't have driveways or garages, so as we move to electrification of cars, we can't accommodate that to park or charge cars. We need to be aware of the different neighborhoods and consider what livability means to the different neighborhoods. I want to ask for you to better engage neighborhood associations and how the projects will impact them down the road.

*Chair O'Meara closed testimony.*

### Commissioners' Comments

*Commissioner Alexander:* Is there an expectation on the part of the City that elevates the global requirements to create sidewalks independent of private property? Can it target where this is created?

- JP: The LTIC is intended for larger projects that serve a bigger need.
- Sandra: It's a multi-pronged approach, and we will have a training coming to you from the Transportation bureau in the upcoming months.

*Chair O'Meara:* Can you provide a reminder about notifications that went out?

- JP: We work through the district coalitions directly for this project to ask them to talk with neighborhood folks, but we only were asked by two for presentations.
- Sandra: There is a neighborhood coalition system in the city. We sent out public notification as required by state law, posted in the newspaper, and emailed our legislative distribution list.

*Commissioner Spevak:* The example about going through a conditional use review process was daunting. This project gets us farther, but anecdotally, I looked at some conditional uses, and they all had parking. I know it's not required by the state, but if we can reduce that obstacle and repurpose those areas, that would be great. A Type II to adjust for parking instead of a Type III would make it easy to repurpose.

- Patricia: We recognize there are things we need to review still, but they are outside the scope of this quick project. We have lots of code amendments on our to-do list, so this is definitely something that could be included in a future project.
- Phil: The conditional uses do have impacts on current use. This work does change things going forward since if a new institution goes in, the number of onsite parking spaces is reviewed.

*Commissioner Routh:* From page 57 related to E, G, and I zones, there are no maximums. How does this overlay with PBOT's TDM work?

- Sandra: There is no strike-through/underline, so we are not proposing changes to the current code.
- Phil: PBOT's TDM program is for residential units of 10+. We were trying to figure out if there is even a property in Portland that would meet this.

*Chair O'Meara:* Are the parking lot requirements on ¼ acre? My concern is for affordable housing development, so I want to be clear on this.

- JP: It's the actual lot size that's ¼ acre or larger for the additional requirements. This is required by the state for compliance.

*Commissioner Routh:* I am fully supportive of these code amendments and appreciate what folks have said about unimproved roadways in Portland, which we need to find ways to fund more intentionally. I'm the former Executive Director of Oregon Walks, and my former board chair used to call it the "sidewalk doughnut": if you look at the sidewalk infill, there's inner, which has generally contiguous sidewalks and then there's outer, with more modern like in the suburbs that have you know, as part of their development contiguous sidewalks required and that especially in places that were annexed that have no contiguous sidewalks which is like where I grew up, and I also appreciate – so there is that tension of those sidewalks. I appreciate how Sandra was talking about the hodgepodge of funding mechanisms like regional flexible funds being one of the few discretionary ways that the city can choose, you know, those more intentionally as you were saying, Commissioner Alexander, the projects, you know, that are of community-wide benefit. I also see walkability and rollability as having that land use infrastructure that allows for more closed in amenities. We're in that messy middle of the tension right now of how we accommodate people's needs and choices right now.

*Commissioner Spevak:* I am glad the state is making all cities do this. We will continue to ask PBOT opportunities for car charging. I do think the conditional use thing is an issue still, so I'm balancing no scope creep here and when this could be a reduced barrier to redevelop parking.

*Commissioner Patel:* I echo Eli's sentiment and am glad we're tasked by this from the state level. We tend to lead across the state on sustainable practices. The comments from public testimony share some concerns, but I think on balance the package of amendments support the city's long-range goals but also speak to housing affordability. The cumulative impact is minimal across the city. And I think it will help make zoning regulations more consistently applied.

*Commissioner Alexander:* I am leaning towards supporting but also understand the impacts over time can grow and expand.

*Chair O'Meara:* I am supportive. And as an affordable housing developer, we take a contextual approach. What I hear is that this is part of a larger question around city infrastructure and that we want to continue to look at other improvements that intersect with elimination of parking requirements.

*Commissioner Pouncil:* This is a great step forward, and I am happy the state is instituting this. I do think it's important that community engagement is there, and I know there are a lot of neighborhood associations... but it's important for a strong effort to ensure people understand how their communities are changing. We should be building on the trust people have in us and the City.

*Commissioner Lange:* Anytime we can clarify code is time to celebrate. Developers don't have to build no parking – they have a choice and can listen to the community. My concern is about listening to the community in building affordable housing and where this amendment may impact. Are we doing undo burden to those who are trying to help (e.g. affordable development)? But I do like where we're going with this.

*Chair O'Meara:* Please send any additional comments to staff by this Thursday's officer meeting. This agenda item will be continued at the April 25, 2023, Planning Commission meeting.

Sandra: Thank you for all the reflections today. I hear one idea for a potential amendment, so staff will work with BDS colleagues to see if we can propose/work something out to see if *Commissioner Spevak* will want to move forward with that; if so, it will be forwarded to all Commissioners prior to the April 25 meeting.

Commission Bylaws

Briefing: Sandra Wood

### Presentation

Sandra noted that one of the things we have briefly mentioned is the Commission's Bylaws. Today is just an introduction, and we will discuss more at upcoming meetings.

All boards and commissions in the City have Bylaws. The Planning and Sustainability Commission had a set of Bylaws, and we are proposing to use that as a basis for the Planning Commission Bylaws. There are some changes that we'll discuss. The Bylaws are a combination of language from the Zoning Code and language to provide greater clarity on Commission operations.

Sandra walked through the sections of the Bylaws. The first part is the Authority, Purpose, Powers and Duties; the second part outlines the more specific rules of procedure and operations for the Commission.

We will have five main topics for discussion as outlined on slide 6.

Staff will send the updated draft Bylaws to the Commission this week, and we will discuss the items at the May 9 meeting to walk through things so the Commission can adopt their Bylaws.

### Training

Briefing: Patricia Diefenderfer, Bill Cunningham, Cassie Ballew, Brandon Spencer-Hartle

Patricia noted the sections of training for today: Comp Plan Implementation; Comp Plan Chapter 3; Comp Plan Chapter 4; and Related Projects.

### **Comp Plan Implementation**

Patricia

### Presentation

Patricia outlined how the Comp Plan gets implemented in the city: BPS conducts long-range planning and writes the zoning code. BDS performs land use reviews and building/development permits – BDS implements the zoning code. Transportation, Parks, Environmental Services, Water and Fire also have roles.

Patricia walked through the various components of the Comp Plan and implementation examples from vision to enforcement. This is a topic we'll revisit, but I wanted to share this as a framework and an understanding of the role of the Commission.

*Chair O'Meara:* About the supporting inventories – my understanding is that those are prepared by other bureaus.

- Patricia: Those are largely in BPS's purview; in fact, the Buildable Lands Inventory (BLI) and Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) are state mandated items to be reviewed and updated and will be coming to the Planning Commission within the year. The other plans are in coordination with other bureaus, and some are amended on a periodic basis.
- *Commissioner Spevak:* Further clarified the role of the Planning Commission for some updates/projects (e.g. Interstate Bridge Replacement project).

*Commissioner Routh:* As someone who has recently taught a piece on public testimony and how different bodies work, can there be a playlist of these trainings and basics?

## Chapters 3 & 4 Presentation

### **Comp Plan Chapter 3**

Bill Cunningham

This focuses in on urban centers that are hubs for services; major streets for transportation and key places; system of open spaces (natural areas) and the place functions of streets. Overall development pattern – the way the city is arranged. A way to think of this chapter is that it's about what and where; Chapter 4 is the details about how they are designed.

This chapter has a good number of graphics and design diagrams, e.g. the Urban Design Framework diagram (slide 6). We are focusing our growth to create mixed-use areas and enhancing our natural corridors as well.

Bill provided the overview of urban form policy direction (slide 7). The objectives describe the city's primary design intentions over the next 25 years. They are informed by Portland's history and its existing physical assets – its people, places, and distinctive features – and help to set direction for the future. The hope is that Implementing the urban design objectives will ensure more equitable outcomes for all Portlanders, help to lower carbon emissions, promote job creation, enhance natural areas, improve mobility, and strengthen the city's resilience.

Centers and corridors focus for housing growth and commercial uses to allow more people to live close to services and transit. Growth allocations are about 30% Central City; 50% Centers and Corridors; and 20% Neighborhoods. Centers are hubs for transit and active transportation, with connections to downtown and employment areas.

Approaches to centers, like their characteristics, is not a one-size-fits-all approach (slide 19).

Corridors are major connections and are important for both growth and mobility. The policy direction is to transform corridors into places that provide livable environments for residents, workers, and visitors, with green features such as trees and green infrastructure.

Pattern areas response to more local-specific distinctions: rivers; Central City; Western Neighborhoods; Inner Neighborhoods; and Eastern Neighborhoods. Growth can occur in ways that build on the strengths of each area type.

*Commissioner Lange:* You talked about light rail stations. Streetcar wasn't mentioned – why is that?

- Bill: It's less of a high-capacity regional transit option. It generally serves NW and the Central City for Portland.
- Patricia: The important distinction is that some transit is connecting within a place (e.g. streetcar) as opposed to light rail, which connects different centers.

*Chair O'Meara:* On the definition of complete neighborhoods, is that evolving?

- Bill: These should be places with access to things you need on a daily basis. It's about services and the means to get there.
- Patricia: If you're asking about the definition – it's not necessarily changing. There are seven amenities identified, and if a neighborhood has 5/7 or more, that is described as (more) complete. We are keeping an eye on how we improve the completeness of a neighborhood, particularly in areas with fewer of the characteristics.

*Commissioner Pouncil:* How does this interact with more industrial areas of the city? How does planning for areas adjacent to industry differ?

- Bill: There is an intersection in that employment lands are in Chapter 3, the interface is in Chapter 4, and the economic development chapter. Urban form just highlights the geography.
- Patricia: When there are adjacencies, there are policies... but there are also challenging issues to approach in different way to think about how the uses can coexist more comfortably.

## **Comp Plan Chapter 4**

Cassie Ballew

The main points of Chapter 4 are to:

- Encourage building and site design that promotes human and environmental health, public safety, and responds to local context.
- Promote strong links among building and site design, streets, and the public realm.
- Guide historic and cultural resource and scenic view preservation.
- Encourage the integration of nature into the built environment.
- Reduce carbon emissions and promote energy- and resource-efficient neighborhoods and buildings.

Cassie shared the goals of Chapter 4 (slide 29). Thinking about the goals in terms of centers, they work to try and make development beyond the public realm but that neighborhoods also work in more sustainable ways and create resilience.

The goals are supported by 13 policy sections (slide 30). Some policies nicely nest to support specific goals; but some overlap, which is the point of these policies and how they apply in different ways. Some policy sections have more weight than others.

Cassie walked through a few policies to offer examples (slides 32-35 and 39-42).

Brandon highlighted the historic and cultural resources policy examples (slides 36-38).

*Chair O'Meara:* Regarding design review, is that essentially using the guidelines as their principles? Is there interface between Design Commission

- Eli: The chairs of the commissions meet, particularly when we have projects that go before each commission. We occasionally have joint hearings. We often do this for the convenience of the public so they don't have to testify in two different meetings.

- Patricia: The Design Overlay Zone Amendments (DOZA) project is an example of when the two commissions met together.

*Commissioner Lange:* A building can be designated historic in different ways. How does that inform what's going on here since that can happen at any time?

- Brandon: One thing that stands out with historic and cultural resources is the federal/state/regional guidance and standards. There are both federal and local designations, and we can talk about some changes about regulatory effects that the PSC made. You have colleagues on the design and historic landmarks commissions, and they implement day-to-day management of historic resources. This commission has a primary role about policy around demolition and management regulatory tools.

Adjourn

*Chair O'Meara* adjourned the meeting at 3:31 p.m.