

Portland Planning Commission

February 25, 2025

5:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commissioners Present: Wade Lange, Mary-Rain O'Meara, Nikesh Patel, Michael Pouncil, Steph Routh, Eli Spevak

Planning Commissioners Virtual: Erica Thompson

Planning Commissioners Absent: Michael Alexander, Brian Ames

City Staff Presenting: Julia Michel, Ryan Singer, Morgan Tracy (BPS); Julia Reed (PBOT), Melissa Ashbaugh (Metro), Paulina Salgado (TriMet)

Documents and Presentations

Chair O'Meara called the meeting to order at 12:33 p.m.

Items of Interest from Commissioners

None

Director's Report

Chief Planner Patricia Diefenderfer gave the Director's Report:

- **PC staff changes:** Julie Ocken will be stepping down as the Planning Commission Coordinator. She will be missed, but we are in good hands with our new Coordinator, Autumn Buckridge.
- **Farewell Commissioner Patel:** I would like to thank Commissioner Patel since tonight is his last meeting.
 - *Commissioner Patel* expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be on the Planning Commission, thanks to BPS staff for their hard work behind the scenes, and to fellow commissioners for their collegiality and willingness to share perspectives and expertise.
 - *Chair O'Meara* offered her thanks to Commissioner Patel for his service and his unique perspective.

Patricia shared a short [presentation](#):

- **Budget overview:** The BPS budget proposal has been submitted by BPS to the City Administrator. Next step is a preliminary budget that will be released by the City Administrator, followed by some listening sessions. The mayor will release his budget in May and City Council will vote in June. BPS is in relatively good shape with the budget cuts. The budget submitted envisioned a 10% cut and we were able to offset those reductions with grant revenue and funding from other partners. There were a few vacant positions that were cut, but it does not appear we will have to lay off staff at this time, though some staff are funded at least partially by grants. This also reduces flexibility in

our work plan and what we can take on. For perspective, the planning staff is 2/3 of what it was in 2010.

- **Planning Commission accomplishments and agenda:**
 - Accomplishments: There were nine legislative projects approved, and several advisory actions.
 - Upcoming projects: Gresham Urban Services Boundary Amendments, Environmental Zone Code Project, Affordable Housing Opportunities Project, Central City Amendment Project, RICAP 11, Economic Opportunities Analysis, Columbia Corridor Industrial Lands Environmental Zone, Housing Bonus Project.
 - Upcoming briefings: Urban Forestry Plan, TSP Amendments
 - Longer-range projects: Lower Albina/Rose Quarter/Lloyd District, Central City Fundamentals, Willamette River North Reach/Floodplain Regulations, Inner Eastside Study, Interstate Bridge Replacement, Fossil Fuels Follow-Up
 - Planning functions: There is a lot of work that staff is working on in the background.
 - Current priorities:
 - Build housing, especially affordable housing
 - Revitalize the Central City and facilitate post-pandemic recovery
 - Environmental protection and resiliency
 - Reasons for projects:
 - Proactive focus on centers and corridors
 - Respond to opportunities
 - Address regulatory impediments
 - Council directive
- *Commissioner O'Meara* asked if there will be a Budget Advisory Committee this year?
- *Diefenderfer*: With all the changes this year, I don't expect a BAC.
- *Commissioner Spevak*: How do projects come down from above under the new system? Is it from Council or the committees or the mayor?
- *Diefenderfer*: That is still being worked out, but we think it could come down from any of those places.
- *Commissioner Thompson*: I wanted to plant a seed for the projects coming down the pike for a Planning Commission liaison as an opportunity for the commission to have a deeper connection and understanding of community priorities beyond the public hearing.
- *Commissioner Routh*: I just want to comment that with all these cuts, I was recently told "Portland is best when we give ourselves the capacity to dream." I worry that we are cutting into that opportunity. Also, will the federal cuts impact BPS's work?
- *Diefenderfer*: PBOT may be losing some funding for the Reconnecting Albina project. So far, we continue to do the work until we hear otherwise. The city is keeping an eye on federal funding and keeping tabs on what changes may come our way.

Consent Agenda

Consideration of Minutes from the November 12, 2024, PC meeting.

Commissioner Routh made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda. *Commissioner Patel* seconded the motion.

Y7 – Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson

82nd Avenue Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)

Briefing and Public Comment

Briefing

Ryan Singer, (BPS), *Julia Reed* (PBOT), *Melissa Ashbaugh* (Metro), *Paulina Salgado* (TriMet)

Presentation

Ryan Singer: We are here to present the 82nd Ave Locally Preferred Alternative. This is not a hearing but is an opportunity for the PC to comment on the LPA.

Julia Reed presented the vision for the Future of 82nd Ave: to strengthen the region by improving transit, with a focus on high-capacity transit, which is frequent, direct, fast and reliable, and runs most of the day. It is also exploring traffic lanes and turning lanes to businesses.

- LPA supports Comp plan policies for safety, equitable transportation, cost effectiveness, amongst others.

Melissa Ashbaugh presented the project timeline. We are currently working on the planning phase, about to move into the design phase through 2027 and then onto construction through 2029.

- The project focuses on 82nd Ave, which is a place that has suffered from underinvestment but has been identified in numerous planning processes as a priority corridor.
- Currently, TriMet Line 72 runs along 82nd:
 - Highest ridership line in the state.
 - Connects to 20 other bus lines and MAX.
 - Has high travel delays, too many stops too close together, and lacks shelters, crosswalks, and other infrastructure.
- Population is high and growing in the corridor, including populations more likely to rely on transit, and is home to many institutional and social service uses.
- The 82nd Avenue Coalition is made up of non-profit organizations that serve the community along 82nd and helped to create an Equitable Development Strategy with agency partners.
- LPA Planning led by a steering committee to come up with a recommendation
- The Steering Committee selected the LPA that can be found in the project documents linked above.
- Terminus selection was a key decision point, with the southern terminus at Clackamas Town Center and the northern terminus at the Cully Triangle.

Paulina Salgado presented the engagement process to date.

- The engagement process included community workshops, neighborhood meetings, open houses, focus groups.
- Community partners included NAYA, Hacienda, Living Cully, McDaniel HS students among others.

- Engagement will continue through the design and construction phases.

Ashbaugh provided a summary of improvements:

- 68 stations – pick up locations will have upgrades including weather protection, seating, real-time information, and lighting.
- Enhanced crossings at every station location.
- Sidewalk, curb ramp and accessibility improvements.
- New signals, signal upgrades and improvements to benefit transit (exact quantity TBD).
- Roadway improvements/repaving at station areas.
- Higher capacity hydrogen electric articulated buses.
- Continuing discussions on priority through Business Access and Transit (BAT lanes).

Commissioner Spevak: How would the new line work with the existing Line 72

Ashbaugh: There will be special buses that run from MLK to McDaniel HS twice a day to serve students that use the current Line 72. And the FX will be connected to the MAX line.

Public Comment

Luis Velasco: Works with Living Cully and other NGOs in the area. Cully is a unique area in Portland that has historically seen underinvestment. As part of the Cully Terminus Working Group, we were excited to see the investment coming into our community and see the FX line as an anti-displacement strategy. Through this process we are having intentional conversations about investment in Cully.

Discussion

Lange asked about lighting as a safety feature – will it be included? Do you know how many trees will be planted. Will there be a transition after the terminus?

Reed: Lighting along 82nd generally is a key part of the projects. I don't know how many, but we are working with a PCEF grant to include as many street trees and median trees as we can. The investments will be focused on the span between the termini.

Spevak: The trees are already going in on the northern end. I know that transit is the most important piece of this project, but I'm thinking about bikes and wondering if the LPA is consistent with bike lanes on 82nd

Reed: We are focusing on transit, but we are also focusing on a “bike ladder” strategy that focuses on parallel north/south routes and frequent crossings.

Spevak: But there is a lawsuit that will could require bike lanes on 82nd because of the Bike Bill. Isn't that a factor?

Kristin Hull (PBOT): Since we are not reconstructing 82nd Ave with this project, we understand that we are in compliance with the Bike Bill and will not need to add bike lanes on 82nd Ave.

Thompson: I'm curious to know if there were lessons learned from the Division BRT project and whether those can be applied

Jesse Stemler (TriMet): We have been looking back at Division for lessons learned, such as what the value of that project is and how it can be replicated. We've also seen how well transit

priority signals contribute to keeping buses in schedule, learned how much the individual stations become a part of that specific location, and how to leverage that along 82nd Ave.

Reed: We are using Division improvements as a model, but we are doing some things differently. We are designing shorter medians and also will be able to plant more median trees than in Division since there aren't the same kind of infrastructure conflicts that we had on Division.

Thompson: We heard testimony about displacement. Are the anti-displacement strategies adequately resourced so that investments can be made before or earlier in the project?

Reed: The EDS identified strategies and actions that were developed with community, which is still in process. One key piece is the TIF districts in the area that will be yielding funds that could be used after 5 years. The backlog for maintenance and repair along 82nd is significant, but things are coming together that will be beneficial to the anti-displacement strategy.

Ashbaugh: The TIF district is one funding stream, but there are also other investments that are happening along 82nd to build affordable housing.

O'Meara: I am wondering about cross-jurisdiction coordination – who is overseeing that?

Ashbaugh: Metro has been the lead during the planning phase, and TriMet will be leading in the design phase. There are MOU's and IGAs and other mechanisms in place.

Pouncil: Since these are larger buses, are there safety measures in place to make sure people are safe?

Stemler: Safety means many different things. Safe crossings and street lighting will be key.

Routh: What did you mean that this is modal for all modes but bikes? Why is it de-emphasized?

Reed: In the TSP, 82nd has major street classifications for all modes of transportation with the exception of bicycles. I would have to get back to you about why the TSP classification is lower. We don't see an opportunity for phasing in bike infrastructure because the ROW is simply not wide enough to accommodate vehicle traffic and turning lanes and bikes. To do so, we would have to take a travel lane from each side, which, when modeled, resulted in significant delays for transit. We encourage cyclists to take the parallel, lower traffic streets.

Routh: Kudos on the community engagement for this project. What is the problem being solved by separating the 72 and the new FX.

Semler: Most of the ridership on the 72 is people riding to destinations along 82nd. We also knew that there was great need for investment along 82nd. The 72 also runs along Killingsworth to Swan Island, but we wanted to focus these investments on 82nd while retaining frequent transit from Swan Island to Parkrose TC.

Routh: I am curious how the issue of stop frequency was addressed?

Stemler: There are a number of factors that are looked at when studying the station locations, including ridership, ramp deployments, and connectivity to stops. Some of the new investments

will help connect people to the stops more easily, so fewer may be needed. TriMet tends to err on the side of more stops for BRT than is done elsewhere.

O'Meara: Does the commission want to submit a letter commenting on the LPA?

Diefenderfer: To clarify, the letter would be speaking to consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

Pouncil: I know that there are some legal issues. Should we weigh in on that?

Spevak: I am supportive of this project. But I also wonder if the perspective would change if gas prices double (in terms of bike lanes). There is a legal process happening, but I don't know whether we should be weighing in on that.

O'Meara: We also must consider whether that is within our purview as an advisory body. It appears that we agree that there is no need for a letter on the matter.

Middle Housing Progress Report

Morgan Tracy and Julia Michel (BPS)

Presentation

Morgan Tracy opened the presentation with a quick overview of what to expect. The report is in-depth, so we'll just be covering the headlines.

- What is RIP? Prior to RIP, single dwelling zoned lots allowed for a house, an accessory dwelling unit, or if located on a corner – a duplex.
- The building size was limited only by height, building coverage and setbacks. On a typical 5,000 sq ft lot – a house could be up to 6,250 sq ft.
- In 2020, the City of Portland changed the rules that govern the types of housing permitted in single dwelling zones (the R2.5, R5, and R7 zones), allowing more housing options, more units per lot, while also limiting the size of new housing.
- RIP introduced a sliding scale floor area ratio, that limited house size, and incrementally allowed larger duplex, triplex and fourplex units.

See presentation for definitions and examples of housing types

Key findings:

- Housing production in the single dwelling zones has only comprised 10-20% of units each year.
- Middle housing production in SD zones has outpaced that of detached single dwelling units.
- After RIP1, fourplexes were the most common type. Cottage clusters are becoming the most common after the adoption of RIP2.
- Over 50% of middle housing units are on individual lots through the middle housing land division process.
- RIP has not induced more demolitions and has doubled the number of units built per demolition.

Julia Michel: In terms of location, we see the most activity in N/NE inner neighborhoods and in southern SE (*See map in presentation*).

- Product type:
 - Most are two-bedroom, 750-1000 sf, in fourplexes.
 - Parking was not included in ¾ of MH projects: No parking means more units.
- Average MH unit prices have decreased with RIP implementation and the average MH unit price is lower than the average detached SD.
- This is because RIP has resulted in smaller average unit sizes.
- RIP has also lowered prices for income-qualified affordable homeownership.
- Market rate and income-qualified middle housing produced after RIP adoption hits a lower average price point.
- PHB's affordable homeownership incentive programs skyrocketed in SD zones.
- Expanding middle housing allowances enabled more households to afford new homes as interest rates rose.

Commissioner's Questions:

O'Meara: So, we don't have data for rent costs?

Michel: There's no easy way to find that data. Most units were for sale though.

Lange: Is there any resale data?

Michel: They are all new sales.

Pouncil: Do we have demographic data on who is buying these units?

Michel: The data does not include demographic data. That would be challenging to get.

O'Meara: The PHB units probably have demographic data available.

Routh: How do we reverse the trend of declining black home ownership? How do we use RIP to address that?

O'Meara: That's probably a better question for the Housing Bureau. Maybe we can pose that question and ask for demographic data.

Spevak: Before RIP, the typical development on these lots would have been detached 3000 s.f. units maybe with an ADU. Are we seeing middle housing in historic districts?

Tracy: We did look at MH in those districts, we saw slightly less, but not a seemingly significant amount. We could tease the data apart a little further to get a better sense. Probably more in Conservation Districts and less in the Historic Districts.

Spevak: Developers don't like discretionary processes and waiting, so RIP has provided new ways for building more by-right housing.

Thompson: This clearly unlocked possibilities for more housing. So, what's the next big thing? I'm curious what the priorities look like for unlocking more.

Diefenderfer: The Inner Eastside Study is the next foray into more housing opportunities. And the Housing Bonus Project.

Spevak: For products like sixplexes, the financing doesn't really work without public financing. Interest rate increases really drove that since the price of what a unit can be sold for dropped. I also think that the bonuses need to be adjusted and hope that the project can be prioritized.

Tracy: We are working on the housing bonus project and the inner east project simultaneously. But I also want to say that in recent years we've juiced a lot out of the zoning code, and while there may be opportunity for some or clean up and simplification, there is a limit to how much zoning reform can contribute to increasing housing production.

Pouncil: I'm wondering if there was a look at the historical context of affordable housing in Portland with this report.

Tracy: Not with this report, but with RIP we did do a deep dive into the historical trends for housing, demographics, increasing unit sizes, and redlining.

Spevak: The last time we had an acute housing shortage was WWII, and that resulted in the War Code that allowed for more middle housing conversions. And we saw differentiation on where that applied – the areas where it was stricter e.g. Ladd's or Irvington are what have now become historic districts.

Routh: I really want to appreciate staff and the Planning Commission and take a victory lap on the hard work it took to get RIP to come to fruition. Let's remember this when the next hard thing comes before us.

Planning Commission Officers

The proposed slate of candidates is:

Chair: Routh

Vice Chairs: O'Meara and Thompson

Pouncil made a motion to accept the roster. *Spevak* seconded the motion.

Diefenderfer: I want to thank you, Chair O'Meara, for your steady hand and leadership over the last two years. And I look forward to working with the newly appointed officers.

Y7 –Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson

Diefenderfer: We will most likely be cancelling the March meeting, but we will be reconvening soon.

Pouncil: It's been great being the Vice Chair.

O'Meara: We thank you for your service.

Spevak: And there is a recruitment happening.

Lange: I want to thank Nikesh for his service and say that it has been great working with you.

Adjournment

Chair O'Meara adjourned the meeting at 7:51 pm.

Submitted by JP McNeil