

Dear Mayor Wheeler,

As current members of the Planning and Sustainability Commission, we respectfully request that you hold off on making appointments for the 3 commissioner positions that come open in May 2021. Between now and then, we will be evaluating the role of the PSC with respect to climate and sustainability issues, and we may propose modifications to how Title 33 defines that role.

For at least the past 5 years, the PSC's work has been heavily weighted towards planning, with minimal role in Portland's climate and sustainability policies. This contrasts with our obligation under Title 33 to hold hearings and make recommendations to the city council on "all policy matters" relating to implementation of the Climate Action Plan and significant sustainable development policies and issues. We have not been doing that.

We've been wrestling with that shortcoming, and intend to spend time at our upcoming retreat discussing options going forward. Ultimately, it will be up to you – and city council – to determine the role you would like the PSC to play.

If the PSC should be advising on sustainability policies, as Title 33 directs, how can we best work with staff and community to fill that role? If the city would like another body to do this, how would it be comprised and supported – and what would public involvement look like? The answers to these questions are important, and will influence the skill sets, perspectives and interests most needed from new commissioners. In short, we believe it will be counterproductive to select three new members now, when the PSC's job description is unsettled.

Taking a little more time will also be fairer to prospective commissioners, since it will allow you to more accurately establish expectations on what they'll be asked to do. Will most of their work revolve around land use issues, as is currently the case? Or will there be renewed attention to climate and sustainability policies? The answers to these questions should inform an applicant's decision to serve and your choice about the right candidates for the job.

We understand the interview process is underway, with an expectation that this application round will be used to fill both the currently open seat and the three coming up in May. Our recommendation is to hold off making any decisions for the three openings in May until the job description is more clearly defined.

Thank you for your consideration,

Eli Spevak, Chair

Cc: Commissioner Carmen Rubio
Director Andrea Durbin