

# Portland Planning Commission

July 9, 2024

Meeting Minutes

## Commissioners Present

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

## Presenting Staff

Eric Engstrom, Patricia Diefenderfer, Ryan Singer, Barry Manning; Shawn Canny (PBOT)

*Chair O'Meara* called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m. and provided an overview of the agenda. All Planning Commissioners are attending in person today.

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

## Items of Interest from Commissioners

*Commissioner Spevak*: Electrify PDX – thank you to BPS for sponsoring the Electrify Portland event on September 15. There is a Pedal Palooza event supporting it on July 10 as well.

## Consent Agenda

- Consideration of Minutes from the June 23, 2024, Planning Commission meeting.
- RW 9194: Street Vacation request NE Alameda St and NE 58<sup>th</sup> Ave.

*Commissioner Routh* moved the Consent Agenda. *Commissioner Thompson* seconded.

The Consent Agenda was approved.

(Y8 – Alexander, Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

## Montgomery Park Area Plan

Work Session: Eric Engstrom, Patricia Diefenderfer, Ryan Singer, Barry Manning; Shawn Canny (PBOT)

## [Presentation](#)

## Disclosures

*Commissioner Lange*: I am (still) a member of the Portland Streetcar Inc board.

*Chair O'Meara:* Today, staff will give a brief presentation, followed by a few remarks from Patricia and BPS Interim Director Eric Engstrom. Then we will have a round-robin discussion followed by a walk-through of the amendments with the hope of voting on the proposal today.

Barry Manning confirmed and shared the full agenda for the day (slide 2).

At the last work session, Commissioners asked about the 2019 Preliminary Racial Equity Analysis. The analysis was an important foundational/background document that helped set the direction for future community engagement and approaches to advancing equity in the Montgomery Park to Hollywood (MP2H) planning process and the resulting, proposed Montgomery Park Area Plan.

On July 8, staff provided a memo to the PC that outlined how the plan considered and incorporated guidance and recommendations from the report in the MP2H planning process, and how they are realized in the MPAP. As the memo noted, the Preliminary Racial Equity Analysis identified and prioritized a set of desired equitable outcomes based on a review of Comprehensive Plan policies. These – and other recommendations in the document - were considered during the planning and engagement process. The specific approaches taken in MP2H and MPAP were further informed by subsequent outreach and analysis.

Slide 4 includes a summary of some key themes from the equity analysis and how the MPAP responds to them. Staff sent a memo with further details that we can respond to later on if necessary.

Ryan Singer noted community engagement for the project (slide 5). Each group and each relationship is different, but the examples give a flavor of the type of work BPS does both in terms of planning projects and more broadly with our equity work in the community via funding, support, and some hiring for consulting on projects.

Ryan also shared context about the study area in terms of demographics and how much change we've seen (slide 6) in terms of population size, income, racial and ethnic diversity, and how the MPAP proposal creates capacity for more population in the area. A goal of doing this is to decrease displacement pressure to allow housing where it is not currently permitted. The provisions of the zoning code and benefits agreement provide opportunity for different income levels and growth in other ways here as well.

Patricia Diefenderfer noted the 77% increase of income-restricted units added in the proposal. As we had indicated, we are interested in revising the public benefit agreement terms to call out the York Group and their role in the future to commemorate York. Slide 7 notes the revised term sheet, which reflects broader involvement, working with the City Arts Program, to determine funding and features to memorialize York. The funds from 2% for Art would also be subject to this input and provisions the group will work on with the property owners.

*Commissioner Thompson:* What is the reference to the RFP process?

- Patricia: To craft the full agreement, there have been changes to the City's arts program after RAAC, so this now takes the form of smaller requests for proposals.

Patricia closed with remarks to summarize the previous work sessions' information. The proposed plan will create a mixed-use, mixed-income area in NW Portland to create more opportunities for affordable housing in this high-opportunity area. This is consistent with the Housing Production Strategy, addresses concerns that were raised by PC members brought up in the Housing Needs Analysis (HNA) conversation. This area is a desirable place to live in the city. This is a catalytic planning process that, together with the others, provide opportunities for much affordable housing, and models for growth and opportunities. The memo with proposed staff amendments also incorporates changes to the plan that acknowledge and attribute to the York Group their work and ideas and expresses the City's support to their efforts in the area.

Regarding the Economic Opportunity Analysis (EOA), the current EOA has a surplus of Industrial Land to accommodate the acreage planned to be moved to mixed-use in this area. The future EOA will take a new approach to accommodating middle-wage jobs and growth. Most viable uses have existing zoning retained.

The extension (.65 miles) is cost-effective transit opportunity that can add 40% more riders from on the N-S streetcar line. It will leverage significant federal funding and create multi-modal streets as well as fund replacement streetcars. Very little local funding can be used for transportation funding elsewhere will be used.

We urge the PC to pass the plan on the City Council for their deliberations. The PC has the transmittal letter to express and address outstanding concerns for Council to consider as well.

Eric Engstrom noted the discussion about the EOA. The City is not planning to mitigate loss of economic areas – this plan sets job targets on the site here. There are many fewer impacts to industrial land and less opportunity for gain than in 2019. The prelim 2019 racial equity impact study was changed to reduce the loss of industrial land that was going to be converted and of course happened in a very different economic time. Central Portland needs investor confidence. The plan highlights NW Portland to enable private sector development with little public subsidy, opening housing and job opportunities with little displacement risk. Public funding will be minimal – the biggest public funds will be the streetcar (federal) and LID, which the private sector ultimately pays into.

Thank you to staff for all your work on this.

### **Commissioner Comments**

*Commissioner Alexander:* Thank you to staff for all the work and for recirculating the initial racial equity analysis. I was drawn to the comment about potentially increasing population density in the area – but I'm interested in who this 30% is. I want this to help the neighborhood be a place where

those who originally could not live and thrive here can in the future. I don't want the perfect be the enemy of the good, but there is better, which is where I'm focused.

*Commissioner Lange:* I agree with *Commissioner Alexander's* sentiment. I have a question when we talk about 800 middle-wage jobs for the industrial area here. If that land sits fallow for years then a company wants to build a manufacturing plant there, but it doesn't employ that many people, what does the City do in this situation? Where do you go with that?

- Eric: The City's primary responsibility is to create the capacity via zoning, not guarantee jobs. So there isn't follow-up because that's not the intent or responsibility. Here with the zone change, we are trying to put in specific goals.
- Patricia: The provisions of the public benefit agreement would be what property owners will be bound to – either help generate the 800 middle-wage jobs or pay per-job basis for programs managed by Prosper that pay for job training and workforce development. In this way, we have a job requirement or a remedy to support training and development. This is unique to this project and something we are trying to capture for public actions that are being taken.

*Chair O'Meara:* Thank you for all the years of work and dedication to this project. I am in support of the project. In this package before us, there is a priority and expectation of jobs. With the expansion of the streetcar line, we can expand to one of the most accessible transit opportunities in the city.

*Commissioner Lange:* I am also in support of the plan.

*Commissioner Alexander:* "I'm in violent agreement" with the proposal. I do think the last provision about Council paying attention to where we want to see focus and investment, I will be a proponent with some concern.

*Commissioner Patel:* Thank you to staff for the years in preparing this plan. I think with the proposed amendment is comprehensive and thoughtfully prepared. It really goes beyond the normal course of a planning project by incorporating community and equity considerations. It sets the stage for more housing and jobs in a carefully thought-out, under-utilized area. The priorities of housing and jobs are ones we need to support as a city.

*Commissioner Pouncil:* I reiterate the comments of thanks to staff. I am quite excited to see an uptick and potential for vitality in the area. I like where this is going as it could be a wonderful thing for Portland and others to see how we can grow. We have done some amazing things around racial equity analysis, but in the 2019 equity analysis, I think we missed some things in this plan. I am grateful for the opportunity to do the hard work, but it is difficult to know our history and know there are tools we can use but not see the tools being used in their best practice. We shouldn't look at bare minimums, and we make an example in our work. I'm not feeling ready to move forward without further deliberation.

*Commissioner Routh:* I've rarely felt more vacillating on any project than on this one. I am on the fence on this vote. The best form of the yes argument is that we are best as a City when we have a

vision that is implementable. If this project was not rezoning from industrial, that would be much easier for me. Trade-offs around different parts of the city are important for me to think about. In terms of the question of middle-wage jobs, we need to ask what a good job is and how we relate to industry. I am swayed by *Commissioner Lange's* comment about if we don't create this place intentionally, what does that mean? How does distribution impact transportation and other public health issues in this area? We have an opportunity to help shape and how it changes in this area. I don't know what the alternative is if we don't take this step to move the project forward to Council.

*Commissioner Spevak:* This reminds me of when I first was debating coming on to the Planning Commission. Generally we get to talk about policy but not politics. I do feel some politics coming in with this project, though. We are struggling to build any market-rate housing right now. Process and product is another item – I like the product, but I am unsure of the process, particularly around the York Group. This project isn't that large in area, so I perhaps would have liked a tour of it. I would highly recommend people watch the Remembering York video. I am not convinced we can move this forward without the EOA finalization as staff has noted. I hope the York Group can do more as they have asked/proposed here in the public benefits work. I respect the benefits agreement, but this seems big to me in terms of things that will be required at this site that won't be required elsewhere – so my concern is for the development community, but I can trust the analysis. I might have a small amendment about parking if we want to get into that later today.

*Commissioner Thompson:* Like a few others, I have felt conflicted about the plan and vote today. I agree with others that the plan's aspirations do a lot of good things in the area. I want to recognize the innovation and the use of a public benefits agreement with private property owners. I have serious reservations, but I can't derive an amendment to address my concerns. The first issue I have is the community engagement process with BIPOC-affiliated groups in particular. The absence of an updated EOA makes me nervous. I didn't feel like there was a strong outpouring of support for the housing component – I would have supported with enthusiasm if housing advocates were very supportive. Reluctantly I'm learning towards a "no" vote, but I also don't want to be a barrier in moving this forward as I feel there is more work to be done.

*Chair O'Meara:* I recommend we proceed to the amendments discussion.

Barry: We have 16 amendments, most of which were staff in response to conversations at previous work sessions as well as technical amendments.

### **Amendment 1, Volume 1: Technical Amendments 1.a and 1.b**

### **Amendment 2: UDF amendments 2.a, 2.b, and 2.c**

*Chair O'Meara* moved amendments 1 and 2. *Commissioner Spevak* seconded.

(Y8 – Alexander, Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

### **Amendment 3: Action Table amendments 3.a, 3.b, 3.c, 3.d**

*Commissioner Spevak* highlighted 3.d to provide more proactive management of parking and the direction on creating a future parking management strategy for the Plan area.

*Commissioner Pouncil* asked to clarify amendment 3.c and community engagement. Can we reference the 2019 equity analysis and how we engage with community groups when decisions are being made?

- Patricia: this can be incorporated into the tables.

*Commissioner Thompson* asked for clarification of the tables.

- Eric: Action are tables at the end of Volume 1 of the plan. They are typically adopted by Resolution.

*Commissioner Lange*: Does this become a template for future planning areas, or is this specific to MPAP? What about other groups outside of York? Should they be named?

- Barry: They are specific to MPAP. York was the most prominent in the discussions.
- Patricia: If the York Group or others are seeking support for greater inclusivity in the area, that this the intent of this line. There would be similar treatment of these groups.

*Chair O'Meara* moved amendment 3 with the inclusion of suggestions from *Commissioner Pouncil* about the initial racial equity analysis in 3.c. *Commissioner Routh* seconded.

(Y8 – Alexander, Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

### **Amendment 4: York Group contributions in community engagement section of introduction**

### **Amendment 5: Attribution of Ron Craig in naming of NW York Street**

### **Amendment 6: Reference York Group participation in Public Benefits Agreement elements summary**

*Chair O'Meara* moved amendments 4, 5, and 6. *Commissioner Alexander* seconded.

(Y8 – Alexander, Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

## **Volume 2, Zoning Code amendments**

### **Amendment 7: Zoning Code technical amendments**

### **Amendment 8: Main street and streetcar alignment standards**

### **Amendment 9: Required nonresidential use**

### **Amendment 10: Fences in the residential-employment buffer area**

### **Amendment 11: Replace bonus option approval criteria**

*Chair O'Meara* moved all Volume 2 amendments, 7-11. *Commissioner Lange* seconded.

(Y8 – Alexander, Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

### **Volume 3 amendments, Transportation Plan**

#### **Amendment 12: Add right-of-way standards recommendation for NW York Street**

#### **Amendment 13: Refine NW Vaughn Street project recommendations**

#### **Amendment 14: Reclassify NW Nicolai Street / St Helens Road to “Industrial Road”**

#### **Amendment 15: Refine Freight District boundary**

#### **Amendment 16: Revise Emergency Response street classifications**

*Commissioner Lange* asked to clarify “industrial road”.

- Shawn Canny: This is a design classification that emphasizes truck movement and industrial districts and freight movement. It typically doesn't change the right-of-way or street size at all. It would direct us to develop standards for the preservation of historical loading docks.

*Chair O'Meara* moved the package of Volume 3 Transportation amendments, 12-16. *Commissioner Pouncil* seconded.

(Y8 – Alexander, Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

### **Additional discussion**

*Commissioner Lange*: Some commissioners have similar thoughts around Amendment 10 about fencing between residential and commercial. Can you explain exactly what you mean?

- Barry: Construction of fences, which is considered a structure, in the buffer area where other types of development are not allowed. It would allow for it but not require it.
- Eric: The zoning code has various levels of fences, so you can specify different levels in different situations.
- Patricia: The purpose is to create a buffer and screen.

*Commissioner Lange*: If residential units go up and they don't put a fence up, but then industrial development goes in and the residents then do want the buffer, how does that land?

*Commissioner Routh:* A fence is a physical, visual buffer. The interplay between residential and industrial is something we've seen before. How do they coexist? I am curious about some sort of public health overlay zone about buffering between residential and industrial considerations.

- The fencing is for the EX-zone in a 20-foot landscape set-back. So the housing side of the line is larger, but you could put a fence in this area as noted in Amendment 10.
- Patricia: The provision about adding a fence is essentially in the rear yard set-back where you typically wouldn't be allowed to put a fence. The EG-zone is also a transitional area.
- Patricia: There is no existing public health overlay zone, so this item could be in a transmittal letter to Council.

*Chair O'Meara* emphasized that if we get to a recommendation today, there will then be opportunity for further public comment when the package is at Council.

*Commissioner Routh:* I wonder if we could preview a conversation about what could be in a transmittal letter before we vote.

*Commissioner Spevak:* I am curious about the public benefit agreement and this plan – they go to Council together, right? I would add to the letter something particular that the public benefit agreement should be posted well before the Council session (e.g. 30 days before).

- Patricia: Planning documents are typically posted at least 30 days before Council, so we can incorporate the PBA too.

*Commissioner Pouncil:* I submitted a letter. Will that go to Council or just stay with staff? I would also like to see some type of outreach to tribal community. And I can't help but say that it's also important that the document from MP2H is referenced and used when making decisions about the PBA.

- Patricia: You sent those comments to staff, so they won't be forwarded to staff as member of the PC.

*Commissioner Thompson:* Opportunities to strengthen the PBA by including some of the community-based organizations and the York Group in particular in that process. What is the timing for this to go to Council?

- Patricia: We already have a meeting scheduled with the York Group. If you want to include something in the transmittal letter you could in terms of the PBA. We ultimately will take direction from Council on the PBA.

*Commissioner Alexander:* I support the comments of my fellow commissioners. We have focused and have intentionality with the York Group. The proposal for the urban village is larger than what we've discussed, so I want to be sure to note that in our letter – and highlight how other bureaus can begin to import this as a model and willingness of the City to partner where appropriate.

*Commissioner Routh:* It would be good to highlight this is a scoped project that was originally larger. Staff have listened to the importance of retaining some of the industrial land. So I'm definitely appreciating the many conversations that have led to the scope of this project.



*Commissioner Pouncil:* Policy 5.17 and 6.13 in the racial equity analysis is important to highlight.

**Vote on the full MPAP package**

*Chair O'Meara* moved to recommend City Council adopt the Montgomery Park Area Plan as amended today. *Commissioner Lange* seconded.

(Y6 – Alexander, Lange, O'Meara, Patel, Routh, Spevak; N2 – Pouncil, Thompson)

*Commissioner Lange:* Thank you to staff and all the conversations and our commentary and deliberations today.

*Commissioner Routh:* I was thinking as I came in to today, “who is this for?” I appreciate the intent with communities and work. The other piece is how this plan relates to other parts of the city. I will use the transmittal letter as I think that is an important jumping-off point particularly in low-income communities and communities of color.

*Commissioner Spevak:* This is housing for lots of people who need it in a great location. It is an opportunity for the York Village concept. The fear is that it takes a long time or doesn't happen, but I'm optimistic.

**Adjourn**

*Chair O'Meara* adjourned the meeting at 2:46 p.m.

Submitted by Julie Ocken