

# **Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission Retreat**

## **September 8, 2011**

### **1900 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, BPS Conference Room 7A**

**Commissioners Present:** Andre' Baugh, Karen Gray, Don Hanson, Mike Houck, Gary Oxman, Lai-Lani Ovalles, Michelle Rudd, Howard Shapiro, Chris Smith, Irma Valdez

**Commissioners Absent:** Jill Sherman

**BPS Staff Present:** Susan Anderson, Director; Michael Armstrong, Sr Sustainability Manager; Eric Engstrom, Principal Planner; Alex Howard, Portland Plan Project Coordinator; Julie Ocken, PSC Coordinator; Sandra Wood, Planning Manager; Joe Zehnder, Chief Planner

## **I. Welcome and today's agenda overview**

## **II. Review of PSC purpose, purview, lens**

Title 33: the main things are about the purpose about PSC's role to advise Council. The Commission is to be the primary steward of the Comprehensive Plan, Climate Action Plan and the zoning code. Also included is information about the duties and about how PSC does its work.

There was a review of the PSC's first retreat ideas for Vision for the Commission, wherein they compiled their ideas into six main areas:

1. creating the best city
2. equity
3. community
4. innovative
5. proactive
6. effective, strategic, intentional action

Commission members discussed the past year, their role and things they saw as successes and opportunities. Members were happy with their work in being more proactive than in previous years as the Planning Commission. The PSC's new members have brought new perspectives, commission members were more engaged with other groups (for example bringing in experts from the Portland Plan topic areas) and hear about topics that the Commission hadn't heard or seen before.

The Commissioners confirmed they need to be more deliberate in being the forum as the last citizen input before a project or plan goes to City Council - and that PSC should be at Council to deliver the messages they hear at the PSC meetings, incorporating the public's voice with the Commission's recommendation. There was further discussion about how to best bring the community's voice to the decision-making process, including an option for PSC members to visit sites to ensure the recommendations to Council take into account best spending dollars wisely.

Regarding "equity", Commissioners are all using this as a lens in some sense, but the Commission as a whole has yet to have a definition of the word. The Portland Plan's equity definition can be a starting point, but it still may be vague.

A recommendation to have projects that have come before the Commission then that have gone on to Council return to the PSC to see how equity is being applied throughout plans/policies and to hear how the plans/policies are being carried out.

In addition to looking at specific plans and policies, the Commission also should have the perspective of the city as a whole. There is a fragmented, project-by-project, not a 30,000 foot view consistently to review how each plan affects the rest of the city. Equity involves looking at the city as a whole system and looking how supporting some projects mean others may not get the support they need to succeed. The Commission also needs to be aware of the media's role - and that it often pits one "side" of the city against another. Portland is a city of small communities making up the full Portland community; so there does need to be the balance of weaving things together. Part of the PSC's job is to take facts and information along with people's opinions and merge them together.

### **III. PSC year 1 summary**

Commissioners reviewed the list/break-out of projects that have come before them in the past year. There was a strong feeling that more collaboration - formal or informal - should be taking place between the PSC and PDC's commission. The PSC Chair meets with the Landmarks and Design commissions' chairs quarterly, and they will be extending the invitation to the PDC chair. Conversations with PDC would be beneficial to future planning decisions.

Also, the Office of Management and Finance is working with staff to link the annual budget process to the Portland Plan objectives and goals. Since economic development is a key component to the Plan, this will be a piece incorporated throughout the budgeting process. Economic development is also consistent with the Thriving Youth component of the Portland Plan. The Commission needs to start feeling visionary as Commissioners. If we don't talk economic opportunity and jobs, poverty will continue to move farther out in the city. The connection to the budget process is critical; today the process is relatively subjective.

Looking forward, the PSC has to provide the leadership for the Portland Plan. The Commission is the first to see the Plan and hear the concerns/input from the community. Partners should return to the Commission to talk about their pieces of the plan.

Commissioners discussed the option for a simple assessment tool/toolbox to review plans on a standard level. This could come from the indicators and metrics coming with the Portland Plan - the PSC could use something similar for decision-making.

One thing on how we make decisions: health, econ, equity assessments in decision-making... goal to develop this year... a simple set of lenses.

### **IV. Logistics**

Time management: staff will continue to plan meetings with a 3-hour agenda.

Regarding the 3-minute time clock used for testimony, Commissioners decided that they will consistently use the clock with the light - but will use the buzzer during Portland Plan hearings. This will create a more professional and standard approach to receiving testimony. When there are relatively few testifiers, Commissioners can extend their time by asking questions of the testifiers.

Paper copies of documents: are people interested in just receiving electronically?  
Hard copies will always be sent to Mike, Michelle, Chris, Andre', Howard, Don, Karen and given to Joe and/or Susan. For longer documents, staff will send the online link to Commissioners. Additionally, staff will send the online link to any PowerPoint presentations given at the meetings to Commissioners following the presentations.

Other committee representation - many PSC members sit on other committees. To share information better with the full Commission, people who sit on other committees will give brief updates at the PSC meetings during the "Items of Interest from Commissioners" section and quarterly during a report-back time at designated PSC meetings.

The draft Bylaws were shared and discussed. The PSC will vote on these at the 09/27 meeting. Commissioners determined:

- The election of officers should be majority vote of full Commission (not just those present at first meeting at the year when the vote occurs).
- The Chair will vote during all hearings.
- There is a need to be rigorous about confirming the quorum before each meeting. Staff will confirm, and Commissioners will let staff know their availability at least 48 hours before the meetings (barring unforeseen day-of conflicts).
- Without a quorum, there may be the potential to have an informal discussion for briefings even if we don't have a full quorum. Staff will check with the City Attorney about this point.
- On the agenda, we will move reports from the Director and Commission members to the beginning of the agenda.

## **BREAK**

### **V. Preparation for Portland Plan hearings**

Review of schedule of PP meetings

- Hearings: 11/08, 11/15, 11/29; each starts at 5:30pm. The first 2 will be in the community, with the third at the 1900 building.
- PSC work session and recommendation: 12/13
- 09/27 is current publication date of draft Plan.
- Hearings will include public testimony as well as a synthesis and staff report time at the end.

Testimony

- Restating: PSC members will encourage people to be brief if their comments have already been stated.
- During the meetings, we will close receiving testimony cards at 7pm (1 hour into the testimony section)
- The first 2 meetings should be listening posts for the Commissioners. Discussion will be limited/managed by how many people are testifying.

Regarding Commissioners' questions and comments

- Submit written comments and reactions, then staff will respond to comments in a staff memo prior to each meeting. The memo will include details about comments, questions and themes the public has stated at the hearings and via written comments the Bureau receives directly.
- Prior to the work session and recommendation meeting, staff will provide ideas for recommendations the Commission can/should make.
- After the 11/29 hearing, testimony will remain open for 2 days for the public to send in their final thoughts. Staff will provide the Commissioners with a final memo on or about 12/06.
- Staff can provide Commissioners with forms for each meeting to compile thoughts about what they heard.
- Everything is public record.

- Commissioners will have the Plan draft 1 month before the first hearing. Commissioners should send in comments to staff after first hearing so Commissioners hear public before sending in updates/ideas.

The Mayor will present at first meeting. His brief presentation will be to frame the Plan for community members and about thinking and intentions of the Plan. Key assumptions will be emphasized. While trying to be aspirational, it is also thinking about the reality of resources, being efficient.

Working with the media and Commissioners' communications about the Portland Plan

- Prior to the Portland Plan being released, staff will provide Commissioners with a media release, talking points and the "elevator speech" as preparation for conversations with the public and the media. Julia Thompson and Eden Dabbs on the communications team are also available to help with messaging.
- Generally, PSC Chair Andre' Baugh will be the spokesperson for the PSC (exception: the reporter asks you to comment on your own comment, for example).
- All media inquiries should be directed to Andre' via Julie Ocken or Sandra Wood. Reaching out to either Eden or Julia on the BPS communications team to discuss the inquiry would be appreciated as well as they can help think through a response and who else should be part of the story.
- Commissioners are not obligated to answer reporters' questions on the spot, and many times it's actually better to write down their questions, clarify what they're writing about/interested in and tell them you or Andre will get back to them shortly. Be sure to ask them what their deadline is and do your best to accommodate it.
- Portland's reporters are generally reasonable, but nothing is "off the record" so please be thoughtful in your responses. If a reporter becomes confrontational, you can always take a break and get back to them (Example: "I'm not sure. Can I look into that and get back to you?").
- Reporters can be allies in telling the Portland Plan story, too, by informing and educating the public about this plan for everyone.

Staff provided a draft presentation that will be given at the beginning of each hearing. The challenge of the presentation is at what level of detail the presentation should delve into. Key components to the presentation include:

- Work smarter, practical, work in partnership across jurisdictions
- "radical common sense" - the Plan does not assume funding; it assumes the resources we have are all that we have to work with the Plan
- Numerical goals: 5 year action plans and 25 year goals
- Whole city and geographically-specific concepts
- This is a plan for people, not just land use
- Actions to respect culture, history, environment throughout Portland
- Crosses bureaucratic silos
- Advancing equity is critical... because we have a shared fate
- Prosperous, healthy and equitable

Commissioners discussed the presentation draft.

- Commissioners liked the balance and length of the presentation.
- We are trying to figure out the balance of short-term practicality and long-term aspiration. People are currently in a state of "things are tough and will be for the long-run". The presentation should recognize the current austerity but say "it's not always going to be that way". Always need to be effective and efficient.
- Also - the presentation still uses some jargon... e.g. what is "traded sector"... that can be damaging to people's understanding. We need to make the plan and presentation very accessible to all public.
- Who connects to the plan depends on how we are presenting it.

- The presentation verbiage can be slightly different from the written version - the communication piece is essential for everyone's understanding and engaging in the Plan.
- A slide should state there are weights and measures and indicators in the Plan; it's not just some lofty idea. The real Plan is full of indicators that are measurable.
- PSC members should be "cheerleaders" for the Plan.
- The Plan and presentation should highlight the cross-bureau collaboration and multiple-benefit projects, especially tying in the objectives to the City budget process. If other partners don't take initiative for their parts, the Plan falls apart. We need to encourage partnerships to flourish. Without collaboration, we can't move ahead.

## LUNCH

### VI. Continued Portland Plan discussion

Geographies: The Plan highlights the city's 24 residential plus the industrial area in the city. Within each geography, there are 3-4 neighborhoods clustered around main street and/or commercial core, accounting for 5000 to 25,000 people in each area. The geographies are driven by the walkable, 20-minute analysis.

There are also city-wide geographies. There is a scorecard in the draft Plan that ranks and gives data for all 25 geographies relative to local versions of the 12 indicators also outlined in the Plan. There will be a set of recommendations for each geographic area, showing "what's relevant where you live" and linking the information back to objective data. It's also about resources: if we're directing resources to a specific area, this is backing to show why funding is going to a specific area. It will support smart distribution of resources versus same funding everywhere.

The 12 indicators loosely correlate with the 9 action areas. Once adopted, as a communication strategy, we want people to have "My Portland Plan". Equity is built into each indicator. There is also the issue of diversity and distribution of diversity throughout the city.

Commissioners discussed some of the verbiage and indicators used. Staff noted this is a tiered structure of indicators, so we could tell some sub-stories within each indicator. We need to tell the full story as well as the smaller actionable items.

There was discussion about how we will deal with places that, for example, have multiple deficiencies notes: will these areas receive funds first, will we tackle multiple deficiencies in one area simultaneously, etc. The reality is that we can't afford to make all changes at once. We want to give each area of the city something of a check-list that both the City and the community and/or individuals can use to be strategic in actions. When you look at individual neighborhoods, you can see disparity. The trick is how to keep those that are doing well while bringing up others; there is not a clear methodology for how to start or at what indicator for areas that are deficient in multiple areas. One idea could be noting w the key elements you can improve to bring up all neighborhoods to a certain baseline are, and which can then link to other areas to link and bring the area up further. The PSC could suggest (to Council) the levers we could be pulling that would create a baseline for all areas.

### VII. Next year's work plan

Portland Plan will be the major project at the PSC through the end of this calendar year. Then will be tracking the Plan (e.g. at City Council). Also in the Portland Plan there are a number of things BPS is responsible to start implementing, especially the Comprehensive Plan update.

Commissioners expressed a desire to have an assessment process that will allow them to evaluate the equity, health and economic impacts of choices brought to the Commission.

Other things the Bureau is doing that may be of interest to the PSC - there may be topics the PSC wants to hear about, for example:

- Beginning to implement the Plan
- Gentrification and brownfields - BPS is looking at developing a paper on each topic (briefing for Commission)
- The Sustainable Development Commission was an advocate for items that are related to planning, but also items beyond that, for example district energy, commercial building disclosure... somewhat been lost.
- Staff will include a half hour on an agenda in the upcoming months to define other issues the PSC wants to work on. This will allow Commissioners to see the range of projects BPS is working on then have an opportunity to learn about some of the specific projects PSC members can advocate for.
- The ultimate goal for the PSC is to help Council make better decisions - in areas beyond land use. Sharing and offering the insight from the community is useful to Council.
- While we're adopting the Plan, we need to make sure Council members and bureaus believe in it... plus partner organizations (this is a role for the PSC as connectors and communicators). We don't want to do this work then have different people on Council in 2 year that want to do something different.