

CITY OF FIFE
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING

Fife City Hall

January 5, 2009
7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER –

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm with the following present:

Commissioners: Acting Chairman Jeff Brown, Richard Garchow, Fred Thomas, Shannon Thornhill, Donald Alveshere and Jim Call

Excused Absence: Doug Fagundes

Staff present: Planner 1 Chris Pasinetti, Code Enforcement Officer Chris Larson, and Senior Administrative Assistant Katie Bolam.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

Commissioner Call moved, seconded by Commissioner Garchow, to approve the minutes of November 3, 2008. Motion carried unopposed.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Introduction of new Planning Commissioners

Tonight's meeting welcomes two new commissioners. Donald Alveshere was introduced and shared information about himself: he is employed with the Department of Services for the Blind in Seattle, and has recently graduated with a Master's in Public Administration from Seattle University. He lives in the Radiance housing development and looks forward to serving on the Fife Planning Commission.

The other new commissioner is Doug Fagundes. Commissioner Fagundes is absent due to a death in the family. Sr.Admin.Asst. Bolam reported that he is the small-business owner of Java Billiards, a family-friendly pool hall in Federal Way, and also serves on the Fife school board.

No action needed.

b. Election of 2009 Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

After a short discussion, Commissioner Brown moved, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, that Commissioner Call be named Chairman. Commissioner Call then moved, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, that Commissioner Alveshere be named Vice Chairman.

The vote passed 6-0.

c. Report on Field Trip

Planner Pasinetti reported on the November field trip taken with commissioners Thomas and Garchow. Photos were shown of various concepts, with some discussion of what is liked and not liked by commissioners. Commenting on one photo, Commissioner Thomas pointed out the recessed window allowing for greater display space, something that was very attractive to a downtown space. The photos and discussion also covered sidewalk widths, signs, building height and façade variations, landscaping, murals, and raised crosswalks. It was noted with some dismay that the photos lacked the all-important pedestrian presence; Planner Pasinetti pointed out that it was a windy, rainy, stormy day, while Commissioner Garchow confirmed this and said there were many people seen inside the shops and restaurants. Additionally, Commissioner Alveshire stated his familiarity with the part of Olympia that was shown in the photos, and noting the time of day the photo was taken, said that it is typical that the sidewalks would be empty as it is a more business-heavy district of town. Chairman Call asked about the difference in lease costs for business owners in these older buildings versus the new buildings likely to be built along Fife's 20th Street. Planner Pasinetti answered that old or new, the space will have to be marketed competitively, something that is up to the developer or owner of the building. Chairman Call liked the idea of requiring a continuous awning effect, perhaps resulting in pedestrian traffic even on rainy days. Commissioner Garchow pointed out the ability in Fife for a business to put up panels on the inside to block the view in from the sidewalk; he says that allows businesses to get more sign space than otherwise allowed, and it's unattractive; he'd like to see that practice end. Chairman Call pointed out that not all businesses may want the full-window look. Planner Pasinetti called attention to the purpose of the CMU zone that is being discussed; it is designed specifically for retail, most of which would benefit from the full window.

No action needed.

d. Discussion on 2009 Work Plan

Planner Pasinetti asked commissioners for ideas for the 2009 work plan – any particular things they'd like to see addressed this year. Commissioner Garchow would like to see the zoning review work continue. Chairman Call suggested there be one more sub-committee meeting to bring everything to mind again and plan the next steps, which met the general agreement of the commissioners. Planner Pasinetti said he will plan that and bring all suggested code revisions for review. Commissioner Garchow said the biggest theme to remember is to keep commercial in commercial zones and residential in residential zones. Chairman Call agreed, but says compatible uses need to be kept in mind, as well. It was decided that Commissioners Thomas, Garchow and Alveshire will attend this final sub-committee meeting; Planner Pasinetti will schedule it with them.

Chairman Call suggested traffic signalization and the traffic circles on Valley as possible work plan items, as well as more green strategies. Planner Pasinetti said he will forward those ideas; the traffic items may be public works items.

No action needed.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Sign Design Standards for CMU

Code Enforcement Officer Larson gave a brief recap of the work that has been done on this and the need for it for the benefit of the new commissioners. He then presented the code as it now appears. Commissioner Thomas asked for confirmation that sandwich/sidewalk signs will only be allowed during business hours (affirmed by CEO Larson), and asked why we would want smaller signs in the back, where parking will be. Chairman Call answered that the bigger signs out front are designed to attract passing motorists; once in the parking lot, a shopper will know where he/she is going and only need a small sign to point to the right door. Planner Pasinetti reminded the commission that the CMU zone is designed for pedestrian traffic. Commissioner Garchow asked about delivery-type signs – CEO Larson read from the applicable portion of the sign code, stating that it sufficiently covers that need.

CEO Larson then asked the commission for their thoughts regarding real estate signs; he'd like to insert some language to cover those. Generally, signs are allowed at 20 square feet and 12 feet high; code language already covers this and it could stay clear of legal review. After some discussion, this was agreed upon. CEO Larson addressed an earlier question on murals, reading the current code language as it applies.

No action needed.

b. Development Design Standards for CMU

Planner Pasinetti presented the existing and the proposed design standards for the CMU zone. He specifically noted the opportunity to create an interesting, artsy look by allowing a variety of building heights and facades and encouraging different colored accent pieces (benches and such). Chairman Call said that Fife has been “loosey-goosey” in the past and feels that some structure is needed. Commissioner Thornhill thinks consistency is a good thing and that a cohesive look is needed. Chairman Call made several points:

- He'd like to see numerous places to just sit along the corridor of shops, such as small pockets with benches and nice landscaping.
- He pointed to page 31, where it addresses lighting and uses the word “unduly,” stating that that should be quantified – Planner Pasinetti agreed to strike that verbiage.
- He asked about screening and whether chain-link fencing is allowed – Planner Pasinetti pointed to that section, stating that it is allowed only for gates, and must have wood slats inserted.
- He pointed to the Exceptions part on page 42, wondering if the square footage and dollar-value amounts need updating. Some discussion on this ensued, with Commissioner Garchow suggesting maybe throwing out the dollar-value stipulation, and Commissioner Alveshere suggesting that maybe exceptions should not be a part of the CMU zone.
- He'd like to see murals encouraged.

No action needed.

STAFF REPORT

a. Vision 2040 – Technical Amend

Planner Pasinetti shared the updated Vision 2020 plan, known as Vision 2040. He confirmed that this is a county- and regional-planning tool, and the implications to the cities are based on the classification given by this report. Fife has been notified that it is now classified as a large city, based on the employment base, which means we will be expected to continue to show an ability to meet housing and job capacity figures associated with this classification. Chairman Call asked that the commission be informed of the implications of this study as they become known.

PROFESSIONAL INTEREST ITEMS

a. Downtown Idea Exchange

Planner Pasinetti pointed to many of the items in the report, considered as forward-thinking by the planning field, to be much of what Fife is already doing.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Brown moved, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.