

APPROVED

**CITY OF MONROE
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
January 13, 2014**

The meeting of the Monroe Planning Commission was scheduled for **January 13, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.**, in the City Hall Council Chambers at 806 West Main Street, Monroe, WA 98272.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kristiansen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Secretary Christina LaVelle called the roll. The following were:

Present: Commissioners Bill Kristiansen, Mike Stanger, Dian Duerksen, Wayne Rodland, Jeff Sherwood

Excused: Commissioner Brigitte Tuttle

Late: Commissioner Steve Jensen

Staff Present: Planning and Permitting Manager Paul Popelka and Planning Technician Christina LaVelle

CITIZEN COMMENT

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. December 9, 2013

Commissioner Duerksen moved to accept the minutes of December 9, 2013 with corrections. Motion seconded by **Commissioner Sherwood**. Motion carried 4/0. **Commissioner Stanger** abstained.

PUBLIC HEARING

None

WORKSHOP

A. Comprehensive Plan Amendment CPA2012-C 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update

An update of the 2005-2025 Comprehensive Plan is now underway with completion planned in June 2015. This workshop will review the project process, the Citizens Advisory Committee and community workshops.

Manager Popelka summarized and discussed the following:

- **Envision Monroe** and the **MindMixer program**, an interactive web-based program designed for the user to take surveys, upload photos, and provide information for the Commission, City Council, Citizens Advisory Committee and the public to make decisions on the 2015 Comprehensive Plan.
- Upcoming workshops include collaboration between city staff, the public, Planning Commissioners, Councilmembers, Citizens Advisory Committee and the Comprehensive Plan consultants. Upcoming collaborative efforts include:

- Citizens Advisory Committee meets January 17, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. The committee will have a phone conference with the comprehensive plan consultants to prepare and share ideas for the January 23, 2014 Visioning Workshop.
- Visioning Workshop on January 23, 2014 (Park Place Middle School) at 6:30 p.m. will inform and involve the public in the process of updating 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update. The workshop will involve Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners, consultants, and the public in a joint effort.
- Joint session with Planning Commission, Councilmembers and Citizen Advisory Committee to discuss outcomes of subsequent meetings and share results.

B. Planning Commissioner Training

The first of several planned training workshops will focus on the roles of planning commissioners, meeting procedures and decision-making processes. **Manager Popelka** introduced a video from Washington Association of Cities, *How do City Council, Staff, and Planning Commission Work Together?*

Summary

The Council sets policy and makes decisions that have to be made for the public's future. The Council makes these decisions based on policy intent and high-level overarching authority. Decisions are based on a number of factors (i.e. economic needs of the community, transportation needs) but are all considered through the lens of the recommendation forwarded from the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission possesses the public involvement component. The Commission uses information provided from the City Staff and the public to forward recommendations to the City Council.

The staff crafts documents and provides facts that follow the procedures and policies that are in place and presents these findings to the Commission to make a recommendation. The relationship between the three entities is critical. There must be communication between the three entities that dialogue back and forth, while it is scrutinized in the public eye.

Commission discussion is summarized below:

- Improving communication between the Planning Commission and the City Council by collaborating and meeting informally. **Manager Popelka** stated that the January 23, 2014 public workshop would be a collaborative experience between council members, planning commissioners, staff, and the public.
- Whether more information than just a vote count for or against a recommendation could be forwarded to the City Council to help clarify why a decision was made for or against a specific recommendation. It was suggested that before a recommendation from the Commission was sent to the City Council, the Planning Commission meeting minutes should be included in the packet to provide clarity or context to the recommendation.
- Invite City Councilmembers to important and/or beneficial Planning Commission meetings to provide greater clarity and context on recommendations.

Manager Popelka introduced a second video from Washington Association of Cities, *Why GMA Planning Matters*.

Summary

The Comprehensive Plan process is an opportunity for a community to come together under a vision. Council Members are caretakers of past and future actions that will be made in the City through the policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) provides choices for land use in municipalities. A city can grow and change by choice and design or by chance. It is the privilege of local government to inspire a community to use the tools that the GMA provides to create a city that citizens want to live in and be a part of.

It is important to address why the GMA is important to your particular city or town. Growth is coming and it can be a good thing if planned successfully through the GMA. It helps create a viable economy and the job base line. Discussions with the public on how the City can welcome growth using the tools within the GMA and translating this into a Comprehensive Plan can help a city effectively plan future of their city and their land use decisions.

Commission discussion is summarized below:

- Public involvement and participation in the Comprehensive Plan was discussed in detail. The Commission agreed that it was important to trigger public interest with fun and informative workshops, hands on activities, and interactive web based programs such as the MindMixer program. The Commission discussed the importance of encouraging the public to be part of the Comprehensive Plan process and to emphasize that public comments and input are valued and are considered and used in making recommendations.
- State and County support in the Comprehensive Plan was discussed. Snohomish County Tomorrow group has representatives from all different jurisdictions. The County provides data and technical information (i.e. the 2012 Buildable Lands Report) for cities to use in their Comprehensive Plans.

Manager Popelka conducted a presentation and discussion on information from the *Planning Commissioners Guide* distributed earlier to the Commission.

Summary

The work that Commissioners do is often technical. However most of the time, it is more about working through priorities, values, and different perspectives. Planning is one of the extreme examples of administrative discretion found in American government and it is important to weigh priorities in the light that the Commission is a public body and has certain responsibilities to the public and the City.

Commissioners' responsibilities are limited to Comprehensive Plan amendments and all aspects of the zoning code and code amendments. In everything that a Commissioner does, it should always serve to support the public interest. Commissioners need to try and represent the whole community and use good judgment when making recommendations to Council.

Commissioners must consider and balance what is happening today with what will happen tomorrow as a result of any recommendation. Commissioners must not only consider the facts and try to avoid uncertainties, but must also attempt to balance the facts with their values. This can be difficult when a diverse and varying community has different beliefs and values. This makes it difficult in deciding how to include property rights and state law with an open, transparent and due process.

As a Planning Commissioner, your decision is a balance between good judgment, ethics or values, and the public interest. This can sometimes cause a conflict in which personal values may be compromised.

The *Planning Commissioner's Guide* emphasizes four different types of decision makers. These are as follows:

- 1) Analytical - very objective; focus is on analyzing existing conditions and not so much towards future; not as concerned about following policy but bases decisions on the logic of analysis when conflicting goals seek a balance.
- 2) Utilitarian – focus is on consequences; relies on balancing values and recognizes policy as an important aspect of the decision making process; likes consistency.
- 3) Common Sense - higher level principals become driving principal; tend to empathize with applicant or public; focus on one goal without seeking a balance.
- 4) Proper Conduct – focus is on rules, regulations, and process; testimony that is based on fact is important.

While there are different ways that a Planning Commissioner may come to a decision, balance and consistency are the key to a solid and fair decision. Balancing facts, compassion, a sense of fairness, and neutrality will lead to a successful Commission and outcome.

Commission discussion is summarized below:

- Difficulty in making decisions when the Planning Commission is meeting once or twice a month.

DISCUSSION BY COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF

Manager Popelka:

- The Visioning Workshop on January 23, 2014 (Park Place Middle School) at 6:30 p.m. will inform and involve the public in the process of updating 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update.
- Sign code will be addressed later in the year.
- Moratorium issuing permits for marijuana businesses and banning medical marijuana permanently.
- The layoff of the Economic Development Manager was discussed.

The Commission welcomed Mike Stanger to the Planning Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Rodland moved to adjourn the January 13, 2014 Planning Commission meeting. Motion seconded by **Commissioner Jensen**. Motion carried 6/0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.



Bill Kristiansen
Chairman



Christina LaVelle
Planning Commission Secretary