



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Final

Planning Commission

Wednesday, February 3, 2021

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Chris Spivey (Chair), Darrell Windsor, Stacy Mudry, Wendy Alderson, Katie Riley, Thor Christianson (assembly liaison)

Absent: None

Staff: Amy Ainslie, Ben Mejia

Public: Barth Hamberg, Ariadne Will (Sitka Sentinel)

Chair Spivey called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A [PM 21-01](#) Approve the January 20, 2021 minutes.

Attachments: [1-January 20 2021 DRAFT](#)

M-Windsor/S-Mudry moved to approve the January 20, 2021 minutes. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie informed the Commission of virtual Commissioner training house by the Clerk and Legal Departments on Friday, February 12th at noon. Ainslie explained that the training would cover Roberts Rules of Order, Open Meetings Act, conflict of interest, and ex-parte communications. Ainslie also notified the Commission of the annual conference offered by the Alaska chapter of American Planning Association, which would be offered virtually for a full day on Sunday, February 21. Ainslie told the Commission that the Planning Department had sufficient funds to cover registration costs for any Commissioners who would like to attend.

VI. REPORTS

VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

B [MISC 21-02](#) 2021 Commission Visioning and Comprehensive Plan Review Session

Attachments: [Comp Plan Actions Short-List Version After 2.17.21](#)
 [Comp Plan HCA & Borough Facilities Actions Only](#)

Ainslie provided an overview of the comprehensive plan finalized in 2018. Ainslie explained that the current comprehensive plan served as a framework to guide development up to 2030. Ainslie explained that the plan was organized into seven themes and provided a description of each theme. Ainslie noted that Economic Development provided a broad scope of economic goals and touched upon land management, municipal infrastructure, tourism, and manufacturing. Ainslie described the goals within the Housing section of the plan as focused on affordable housing, the reduction of zoning and development standard constraints, accessory dwelling units, potential funding avenues, and addressing homelessness. Ainslie described the goals within the Historical, Cultural and Arts Resources section of the comprehensive plan as zoning and master planning of areas with historic significance, securing grant funding, and implementing a naming policy, as well as the completion of the Historic Preservation Plan. Ainslie described the goals within the Borough Facilities section as enterprise fund management, work plans for maintenance, and Harrigan Centennial Hall and the library. Ainslie described the Transportation section as airport and harbor management, ensuring road quality and safety, and parking policies. Ainslie described the Parks, Trails & Recreation section as trail and facility maintenance, the establishment of community gardening, and ensuring access to recreation spaces during the subdivision process. Ainslie described the Land Use & Future Growth section goals as the development of a municipal land management plan, zoning changes, agricultural and horticultural regulations, and hazard mitigation.

Ainslie introduced the discussion of vision within the comprehensive plan and explained that the vision intended to capture what the community wanted to become. Ainslie asked the Commission to consider how well the comprehensive plan served to direct the community to that vision. Ainslie explained that one reason to have a clear vision statement was in the procurement of grant funding, where a critique of grant reviews had been the lack of a clear vision for the economic direction of the community or how the grant funding helped meet that goal. Ainslie added that the creation of a strategic plan would assist in sharing the community's vision to granting agencies. Christianson added that, although no formal decision had been made, there had been discussion in the assembly to re-task the investment committee to encompass financial goals, which would have the responsibility of forming a financial plan.

Spivey expressed concern over narrowing the focus to specific goals over others and consequently give more or less attention to the interests of members of the community. Christianson noted the importance of keeping the aims of the plan general to include as many community interests as possible. Riley identified the existing vision within the comprehensive plan as promoting a small town atmosphere with the high quality of life and sustained economic opportunities. Spivey responded that while this was the vision specified in the plan it did not achieve the level of specificity grantors would expect. Riley expressed the desire to respond to the feedback received from previous grantors and establish a focused vision and strategic plan, to make the city better able to achieve then necessary funding for projects that support the community. Alderson suggested that the comprehensive plan be tailored to meet the requirements of individual grants. Windsor replied that the comprehensive plan covered the scope of over a decade and required years to make, and tailoring it for particular grants did not seem feasible.

Ainslie explained that rather than reworking the comprehensive plan, the creation of a strategic plan would be more efficient as it is more focused in its scope, more regularly

updated and served as a supporting document of the comprehensive plan. Spivey recognized the need for a strategic plan but expressed concern about the ability of providing robust opportunities for public comment given the current circumstances of the pandemic. Christianson noted that the comprehensive plan had high level objectives and low level objectives but no mid level objectives. Spivey asked if the administrator and assembly had priorities that they felt the Commission should focus their efforts.

Windsor asked if the city had a grant writer. Ainslie responded that currently each department wrote their own grant proposals. Christianson explained that grant writing was part of the government affairs position which had been vacant for years. Windsor asked if the Commission should have a work session with the Administrator or the government affairs position if filled to collaboratively identify priorities. Spivey noted that the Planning Commission did not have the same visibility as the Assembly and that meant public input through the Commission was a challenge. Riley stated that the process for public input already existed and it was the responsibility of the Commission to encourage its use. The Commission agreed that public support and input was essential to the decision-making process.

The Commission opened the floor for public comment. Ainslie read the written public comment of Adrienne Wilbur, which asked the Commission to consider the effect of systemic racism in Sitka and how land use, housing, and economic development can be used to address it. Wilbur asked of the Commission to consider how long-term rentals could be encouraged over short-term rentals, advocated the use of Tlingit place names wherever possible.

Christianson expressed interest in establishing a process for approval for uses that are currently deemed not allowed in particular zones prior to excusing himself at 7:54pm. Spivey expressed support for revising the land use tables. Spivey called for a 7 minute recess. The Commission agreed to review the items identified as short-term actions in the comprehensive plan to create a short list to establish priorities and recognize actions that had been accomplished. Ainslie read the short-term actions. The Commission identified comprehensive plan actions ED 1.5, ED 2.7, ED 6.16, H1.1a, H1.1c, H1.1e, HCA 1.1h, HCA 4.1c, 8.8E, 2.1g, LU 3.2, and LU 7.8 for review at the next meeting.

No action was taken.

C [MISC 21-03](#)

Review of Use Tables in SGC 22.16.015

Attachments: [Table 22.16.015-2 Cultural & Recreational Uses](#)

Ainslie told the Commission that in 2020, the Commission started a deep dive review of the Use Tables found in SGC 22.16.015. Ainslie described the tables as the governing mechanism in the general code that determined permitted, conditional, and prohibited uses in all zoning districts.

Commissioners agreed that they would like to continue their review of the use tables one at a time, but given the late hour decided it would best to start fresh at the next meeting.

No action was taken.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no objection, Chair Spivey adjourned the meeting at 9:07PM.