

MINUTES
COLUMBIA CITY PLAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 6, 2023
7:00 P.M.

WHITLEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
MEETING ROOM A/B, LOWER LEVEL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Walt Crowder
Jon Kissinger
Don Langeloh
Nicki Venable
Dennis Warnick
Dan Weigold
Larry Weiss, President
Patrick Zickgraf, Vice President

MEMBERS ABSENT

Chip Hill

STAFF

Nathan Bilger

ATTORNEY

Dawn Boyd

(E)lectronic participant

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

The Guest List, attached, was signed by one visitor. There were no attendees on the webcast.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mr. Weiss called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Bilger read the roll call with members present and absent listed above.

CONSIDERATION OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of the November and December, 2022 meetings were presented. Mr. Langeloh made a motion to table consideration of the minutes to March to allow time to review them in depth. Mr. Crowder seconded. Motion passed, 8-0. Mr. Bilger stated that the remaining outstanding minutes would also be presented at the next meeting.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE OATH TO WITNESSES

There being no public hearing items, no oath was given.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

There were no items of old business or new business.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Parking Code status

Mr. Bilger presented a working draft of updates to the parking code, which he estimated was about a third reworked so far. He stated that while working on the code changes, he felt that some parts needed some direction from the Commission. He proceeded through the points of the draft, and the Commission gave feedback on the following.

Mr. Bilger stated that there would be provision for gravel parking for residential uses. He stated that such parking areas would be permissible in addition to the hard surface spaces otherwise needed, and would be edged with timbers, bricks, or similar. Mr. Langeloh asked what would happen if a subdivision had a covenant against gravel driveways. Ms. Boyd stated that the more restrictive regulation would stand. Mr. Bilger added that covenants were not enforced like the zoning code, so they would be separate issues. Mr. Langeloh stated that gravel parking and yard parking could drive down property values in subdivisions with covenants. There was a general agreement that regulating gravel parking would benefit those places without covenants and not affect those that did.

Mr. Bilger stated that the current sight visibility triangle of 15'x15' was small and did not have much effect, so increasing the size might be considered. He displayed aerials showing the current triangle versus a 75'x75' triangle that another community used. Other examples were reviewed. The Commission felt that the standard should change, but applicability could vary tremendously by location. This would be something to come back to.

Mr. Crowder pointed out that several locations in the code, the Community Development Director or the Board of Public Works and Safety were given authority to make some decisions, such as waivers of driveway setbacks. He felt that in the Director should only make recommendations to the Board, and they would have the final say.

Mr. Bilger stated that he was placing the parking space dimensional requirements into a table for convenient reference. He noted that parking spaces would go up to 9'6"x20' instead of the current 9'x19'. Mr. Weiss asked how double striping parking spaces would change this. The Commission then discussed space width, striping, and the dimensions of angled parking, and then had a lengthy discussion about the on-street parking situation in downtown. After this, the Commission suggested to revise the spaces to be 10'x20' for single striping, or 8'x20' with double striping of 2' in width.

Mr. Bilger stated that the landscaping section should be reviewed, but generally was not something anticipated to be changed much.

At this point, Mr. Weiss recommended setting aside the parking code discussion and moving on to the next topic.

2. Extraterritorial Jurisdiction update

Mr. Bilger provided the Commission with an update on the status of the proposed extraterritorial jurisdiction expansion filed with the County Plan Commission. He stated that the Mayor had recently met with two people who had presented many questions at the public hearing in December. That discussion had given him feedback on important issues for the City Plan Commission to consider.

Mr. Bilger stated that one issue of concern were the uses permitted in the county and city zoning. He presented a table comparing city and county agricultural zoning districts, noting the permitted and special exception uses. He stated that only county special exceptions of auto repair, small retail, and mini-warehouses were not permissible in the city zoning, but all agricultural uses were either permitted or special exceptions. The Commission further discussed the table and definitions of uses. Mr. Weigold was puzzled why there was such a concern about the city zoning given the similarities. Mr. Warnick suggested that it may be

personal opinion of “city folk versus county folk” and the apparent perception that the city zoning would put small farmers out of business.

Mr. Bilger then discussed the proposed ETJ area. He stated that in his conversation with some members of the County Plan Commission, they understood the similarities of the AG and A-1 zoning districts, but they were concerned that the City’s proposal may be oversized. Mr. Crowder said that may be the case, but the lines should be expected to be changed as development occurs. Mr. Bilger concurred, stating that in the future, as annexations occur it should become more common to expand the ETJ. He asked if the proposed area would be setting up the ETJ for the next decade or the next 50 years. Ms. Venable asked if A-1 would ever become R-1. There was agreement that areas could be changed to residential if rezoning requests came through. Mr. Bilger stated that could happen even if it stayed in the county jurisdiction, although the County only had one main residential district, “RR”, while the City has three residential districts. He said that if there was concern about the City Plan Commission proactively rezoning A-1 to R-1 by the Plan Commission was not likely, and several members agreed. There could be concern about someone’s neighboring property requesting rezoning to residential, but that could happen in the county jurisdiction as well.

At this point, there was a discussion about modifying the area of the proposed ETJ, sketching out possible new boundaries. Ms. Venable asked the number of property owners being notified; Mr. Bilger stated that the current area would notify about 300 owners. She asked what the benefit would be for properties in the ETJ. Mr. Weiss and Warnick discussed the potential for development of properties, zoning that would be appropriate for development (unlike Lincoln Pointe, which was mostly zoned AG), and so on. Mr. Weiss reiterated that there would be no effect on current zoning, taxing, or annexation. Ms. Venable said that the effect would be on surrounding properties, so an individual landowner could be surrounded by development. Mr. Langeloh asked how that would be any different from being in the county jurisdiction.

Mr. Bilger suggested a summary that there would be little direct impact, positive or negative, to any individual landowner who may want to continue using their land, which makes it hard to explain what “benefit” might be. There would be more effect for those wanting develop their properties. He continued by saying that development would likely still occur even if in the county jurisdiction, but potentially with lower subdivision standards than required by the City. Mr. Kissinger asked if being in the ETJ would mean utilities would be easier to obtain; Mr. Bilger stated that it would be indirectly easier since properties in the ETJ would be closer to existing utility lines anyway.

Mr. Zickgraf asked if the areas were trimmed, would the County Plan Commission approve the proposal. Mr. Bilger and Weiss suggested that it could, but it should be part of a process to work through modifications so that everyone was better educated for the future.

Mr. Bilger suggested that it would be useful that a representative be designated in case negotiations or changes needed to be made on-the-spot while meeting with the County Plan Commission. Mr. Warnick made a motion to delegate such authority to the Commission President; Mr. Langeloh seconded. Motion passed, 8-0.

Mr. Bilger briefly described a hypothetical zoning district to be created as a “legacy” district that would match the AG district so there would be no change whatsoever when the ETJ is expanded. He explained a couple of the benefits, but also that there may be some drawbacks.

Mr. Warnick asked if this legacy district would eliminate all of the concerns; Mr. Bilger stated that it would address the use concerns, but not the size of the expansion concerns. There was discussion about timing and appropriateness, with the conclusion that it could be brought back to the Commission later if it seems desirable.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Weiss made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Langeloh. The members voted 8-0 in favor of the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 P.M.

GUEST LIST

1. Diana Dupont-Kaufman 1676 S. 700 East, Columbia City

GUEST LIST (WEBCAST)

2. None.