

City of Burien

BURIEN PLANNING COMMISSION
April 27, 2016
7:00 p.m.
Multipurpose Room/Council Chambers
MINUTES

To hear the Planning Commission's full discussion of a specific topic or the complete meeting, the following resources are available:

- Watch the video-stream available on the City website, www.burienwa.gov
- Check out a DVD of the Council Meeting from the Burien Library
- Order a DVD of the meeting from the City Clerk, (206) 241-4647

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Amy Rosenfield called the April 27, 2016, meeting of the Burien Planning Commission to order at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Kim Davis, Butch Henderson, Anna Markee, Kaelene Nobis, Amy Rosenfield, and Douglas Weber

Absent: Curtis Olsen.

Administrative staff present: Brandi Eyerly, planner; Niomi Zinn, planner; and Chip Davis, Community Development Department director

AGENDA CONFIRMATION

Direction/Action

Motion was made by Commissioner Henderson and seconded by Commissioner Weber to confirm the agenda. Motion passed 6-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Direction/Action

Motion was made by Commissioner Henderson, seconded by Commissioner Weber, and passed 6-0 to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2016, meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chestine Edgar, 1811 SW 152nd St., said that while she thinks an urban tree canopy is important, she doesn't believe that every tree must be saved. She offered some suggestions for the tree retention ordinance under study by the commission. She noted that she owns a home adjacent to the Salmon Creek Ravine and said the City is not managing storm water correctly or providing appropriate maintenance to the trees on Shorewood Drive Southwest, which has resulted in landslides along that street. She said there are still hazard trees there that in 1999 an arborist identified for removal and she does not want to see a tree retention policy that would prevent removal of those trees. She drew the commissioners' attention to Attachment 1 to the memo in their packet, which includes a listing of trees identified by the City of Lynnwood as non-significant trees and said she hoped the commissioners would include such a list in a revised Burien tree ordinance.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Presentation and Discussion – Significant Tree Retention Zoning Code Amendments

Chip Davis, Community Development Department director, gave a brief summary of the work to be done on the significant tree retention ordinance. He then introduced Brandi Eyerly and Niomi Zinn, the two planners working on the ordinance.

Ms. Zinn noted that in 2014 the City Council directed staff to present proposed revisions to Burien Municipal Code Title 19.25 – Tree Retention and Landscaping to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation. This work was subsequently delayed by higher priority assignments. She said staff was introducing four items for discussion tonight; the first two were heritage/exceptional tree preservation and tree canopy inventory.

Ms. Eyerly then explained the second two items for study: existing significant tree retention regulations, and incentives for tree retention. She said staff is requesting the commission prioritize the four items for discussion, add anything the commissioners feel is important, and schedule the items for future meetings.

Commissioner Weber asked about the concept of tree banking. Mr. Davis explained that tree banking allows the equivalent value of trees that must be removed from inappropriate areas, such as the airport flight path, to be planted in another area in the city. Currently, that is not included in Burien city code.

Vice Chair Rosenfield asked how the information gained from a tree canopy inventory would be used. Mr. Davis responded that a tree canopy inventory may confirm everyone's suspicions that Burien's tree canopy is diminishing as people develop vacant land or remove trees from their already developed properties faster than they are planting new trees. He noted that most of the trees being taken out are large, mature trees and when they are replaced it's with smaller trees that will take years to become the equivalent of the trees that were removed. A tree canopy inventory helps a city determine how its tree regulations are performing and, as incentives are offered, the effectiveness of the incentives can be measured. Some jurisdictions have tree canopy inventories only of public lands; the proposed inventory for Burien would cover both public and private lands.

Commissioner Markee asked what the current code says about maintaining trees on private property. Mr. Davis responded that currently there are very specific regulations in critical areas and almost nothing for private property that's not encumbered by a critical area. He said it would be helpful to have some guidance included in the regulations to help maintain the function of the tree canopy.

Commissioner Davis said some neighborhoods have covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs) that include tree policies that might be a starting point for discussion about a citywide policy.

Commissioner Weber asked how many trees are removed each year from private property in Burien, adding that he wondered how many people would be impacted if Burien moves to require permits. Mr. Davis responded that currently the City does not have a good estimate because the current rules and regulations apply only to land located in critical areas, which is a small fraction of the privately held land in Burien. Having a tree canopy inventory would help the City estimate how many trees are lost each year.

Commissioner Nobis said she would like to see the results of a tree canopy inventory used to impact goal setting for future tree canopy inventories. She said if the City goes to the trouble of doing an inventory, then it should be used to set goals for canopy restoration in the future. Mr. Davis said that could be included in the Comprehensive Plan and be backed up with regulations that encourage increasing the canopy and discouraging the reduction of the canopy.

Discussing prioritization of the four topics, Commissioner Weber said he'd like to see looking at the existing regulations as a high priority, which then would guide the formulation of additional regulations. Vice Chair Rosenfield agreed, adding that item 1, heritage/exceptional tree preservation, also should be a high priority, while item 2, the tree canopy inventory, should be the last item to work on since it relates to goal setting.

Commissioner Nobis said she was interested to know what criteria would be used to designate a heritage tree and what would be the subsequent impact on property owners. Mr. Davis noted that one of the challenges will be to respect property owners' rights while preserving heritage trees for the future.

Ms. Eyerly referred the commissioners to the Washington State Urban and Community Forestry Program, through the state Department of Natural Resources, which has a great deal of information about urban forest and inventories. She added that it is accessible through the Access Washington website.

Commissioner Henderson asked if, as an incentive to replace trees being taken down, a break could be given on the removal permit if the property owner commits to planting new trees. Mr. Davis said that is something staff can research; perhaps another jurisdiction is already doing that and can say how well it works.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS

None.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Davis welcomed the three newest members to the commission and thanked them for their role of conveying to the staff and City Council the concerns and feelings of Burien residents about various issues affecting the Zoning Code and building codes. He invited them to call staff whenever they have something to share, rather than wait for a commission meeting, and at any time feel free to request something that will help them function better in the meetings.

He also encouraged them to attend the Short Course on Local Planning presented by the state Department of Commerce periodically throughout the year. He noted that Burien will be hosting one in conjunction with the City of Mercer Island on September 28th, which is a regular Planning Commission meeting night. The Burien City Council and elected officials and appointees from surrounding jurisdictions will be invited to attend as well.

Mr. Davis said that at the next commission meeting, on May 11th, there will be a presentation on the downtown mobility study that is currently underway, as well as continued discussion about background, research and conceptual ideas on significant tree retention.

ADJOURNMENT

Direction/Action

Commissioner Henderson moved for adjournment; Commissioner Weber seconded. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

APPROVED: May 11, 2016

/s/ Curtis Olsen, chair
Planning Commission