

*City of Burien*

BURIEN PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
February 24, 2009  
7:00 p.m.  
Shared Conference Room, Burien City Hall  
MINUTES

**Planning Commission Members Present:**

Janet Shull, Stacie Grage, Jim Clingan, Brian Bennett; Joe Fitzgibbon

**Absent:** Rebecca McInteer

**Others Present:**

Jeremy Hammar, Planning intern

---

**Roll Call**

Janet Shull called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**Agenda Confirmation**

Motion to approve the agenda as printed was made by Commissioner Clingan. Second was by Commissioner Fitzgibbon and the motion carried unanimously.

**Public Comment**

**John Levitch**, 2651 SW 164<sup>th</sup> Place, asked the commission for its help in rezoning a piece of property he owns at 202 SW 155<sup>th</sup> Street. About three years ago he attended a pre-application meeting with City planners to begin the process of building an office building on the site. The City required surface water management improvements that were cost prohibitive, so he moved his business to Renton. He now is trying to sell the property. He said it is zoned multiple [family]. Mr. Levitch said he has received five offers on the property, but after the prospective buyers talk to the City the offers have gone away, mainly because, he said, the City told them they can't do 50 percent office, 50 percent residential, and the City also told one man who just wanted to use his garage that that can't be done either. He wants the property rezoned commercial so he can sell it. He asked if he does that by being persistent or by hiring an attorney; he asked the commissioners for help.

Chair Shull thanked Mr. Levitch for coming to the meeting; she then explained the Planning Commission's role as an advisory committee. She then explained that there is an annual process for requesting zoning code and Comprehensive Plan map amendments, which ultimately are decided by the City Council. Mr. Levitch expressed frustration at the whole situation. Chair Shull suggested Mr. Levitch go back to the Planning Department to find out the deadline and process for applying for zoning code and Comprehensive Plan map amendments. Mr. Levitch stated that he thinks the City is not business friendly and says he is concerned as a citizen of Burien that the City is turning businesses away.

**Approval of Minutes**

None

## Old Business

### A. Discussion on Sustainability

Two representatives of Sustainable Burien, Kevin Alexander and Bob Edgar, were present for a roundtable discussion with the commissioners.

Chair Shull explained where the commission is currently at in the process of developing a sustainability program. Mr. Alexander asked what falls into the Planning Commission's jurisdiction and whether the sustainability program would be limited to what the Planning Commission normally does or will the program address the entire City? Chair Shull replied that she isn't sure of the scope of the program at this time; the commission is still in the initial process of exploring the topic of sustainability. In response to the first part of the question, Chair Shull explained that the commission primarily is involved with changes to the zoning code, changes to the Comprehensive Plan, serving as a citizen sounding board for the City Council and forwarding recommendations to the council. Sometimes, she added, the commissioners are asked to look at matters that are related to land use, such as transportation impact fees. She said she would prefer to see the commission make a recommendation to the City Council on how best to proceed with the development of a sustainability program, not that the commissioners would prepare that strategy.

Bob Edgar described the history of Sustainable Burien, saying it was formed in August 2008, although the organizers of the group began meeting a little more than a year ago. He said the focus of the group is generally education about sustainability and actions individuals can take toward sustainability. Sometimes this means bringing in a guest speaker. The group also collects coupons for the local food bank, to help its money stretch further; also members participate in food sharing and gleaning to benefit the food bank. The group is trying to raise public awareness. Mr. Alexander said there is a subgroup working to develop community garden plots, something that would be a good candidate for the City's neighborhood grant program funding. He said the group will be most visible at this year's Strawberry Festival. Mr. Alexander said the group is divided into "pods" of interest – energy, transportation, food, environment and community. He said a couple of people are working on getting a Zipcar in Burien.

Commissioner Grage suggested that one group of people Sustainable Burien can tap into for community outreach is high school students, many of whom have community service requirements.

Mr. Edgar noted that Sustainable Burien would like to work with businesses to determine a set of criteria that, if met, would enable individual businesses to be labeled as meeting certain sustainable practices, which the businesses then could use as a marketing draw to attract customers who are concerned about sustainability and may encourage other businesses to do likewise.

Mr. Alexander said the City could set an example by putting solar panels on the roof of the new City Hall and electrical outlets in the parking lot for electric cars. Mr. Edgar added that the City already is working on low impact development guidelines.

Chair Shull reviewed the options brought forward as examples at the last Planning Commission meeting – a program modeled on Shoreline's approach, working with a consultant team to facilitate public workshops and a stakeholder group; the ICLEI Emissions Inventory plan, focusing primarily on environment and air quality; and a comprehensive plan modification, inserting sustainability goals. She asked Mr. Edgar and Mr. Alexander what they thought of the options.

Mr. Edgar said he would like to see the City make all decisions using a sustainability thought process. Mr. Alexander said the City has to decide if it will focus only on the City's operations or does it want to encourage the businesses and the community as a whole to live sustainably.

Chair Shull then asked the other commissioners for their thoughts on the topic.

Commissioner Fitzgibbon said he believes the program should be as broad as possible.

Commissioner Bennett noted that Scott Greenberg, Community Development director, is leading a group of City staff that is examining how to make City operations more sustainable. He said the Commission should look at the broader picture.

Commissioner Grage thinks that each group – Sustainable Burien, the staff group, and the Planning Commission – should bring its own perspective to the discussion to ensure a broad scope, involving everyone. She encourages a great deal of outreach and public participation.

Commissioner Clingan encouraged the commission to take a thorough and measured approach, rather than rush into doing something quickly. He added that if the City isn't doing it well itself, it will have no credibility in pushing the residents and businesses to make changes. The City needs to lead by example.

Chair Shull said she really hopes residents will become involved in this effort and said once a decision is made on the scope of the project perhaps Sustainable Burien will help get the word out and encourage participation by residents. In turn, Sustainable Burien might gain in membership.

Mr. Alexander said one of the things the City should do it look at the permitting process to be sure the City is ready when applicants propose using new technologies to be more sustainable. There are a lot of options and a lot of things to keep track of, he added. He suggested planting fruit trees when replanting in parks; by making them community trees, residents can help themselves to the fruit.

There was general consensus that using an experienced consultant would help focus the work into manageable pieces; Mr. Alexander noted he would like to see the City hire a local consultant, but allowed that there may not be an experienced consultant in the area. He added that incentivizing will be more effective than regulation.

Chair Shull said she is feeling a lot of support for a strategy similar to Shoreline's. Commissioner Grage agreed that a task force encompassing the business community, Sustainable Burien, the parks department and the Planning Commission would be effective. Mr. Edgar said that may be the place to start, with a core group of stakeholders including various elements of City government and representatives of business, the community and the school district. Chair Shull added the hospital, local utilities and public safety organizations.

Summarizing, Chair Shull said she thinks the city is very fortunate to have both City leadership and grassroots efforts and value in a sustainability program, noting that not all communities have both. Mr. Alexander said he is impressed with a lot of the things the City is doing and a lot of its goals relating to sustainability, and although a lot of it isn't happening yet, the City is thinking about it and doing the things that are easy to do as a first step.

The next meeting of Sustainable Burien is Sunday, March 8, 2-4 p.m. at the Burien Library. The guest speaker will talk about the impact of sustainability on businesses.

### **New Business**

None

### **Planning Commission Communications**

None

### **Director's Report**

None

**Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Clingan; Commissioner Grage seconded. Chair Shull adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

/s/ Janet Shull, chair