



Planning Commission Minutes

Note: Anyone wishing to speak at any Planning Commission meeting is encouraged to do so. If you wish to speak, please rise and, after you have been recognized by the Chair, give your name and complete address for the record. You will then be allowed to speak. Please note the public testimony may be limited by the Chair.

February 28, 2023

Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chair Lisa Verner called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. via Zoom.

Commissioners Present:

Michael Dawkins
Haywood Norton
Eric Herron
Doug Knauer
Kerry KenCairn
Lisa Verner

Staff Present:

Brandon Goldman, Interim Community Development Director
Michael Sullivan, Executive Assistant

Absent Members:

Lynn Thompson

Council Liaison:

Paula Hyatt

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Interim Community Development Director Brandon Goldman made the following announcements:

- The City Council approved the first reading of the Food Truck ordinance that was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission. It will go to the Council for a second reading and final approval on March 7, 2023.
- The City is hosting an economic roundtable with a number of large employers on March 6, 2023. The Oregon Employment Department will also be in attendance to provide background on regional economic issues. It will be televised as a study session by the Council.

III. PUBLIC FORUM – None

IV. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Ashland Housing Production Strategy Update, presentation by ECONorthwest

Mr. Goldman introduced Beth Goodman of ECONorthwest, and related how she had presented before the Commission at its April 12, 2022 meeting on the Housing Production Strategy (HPS), and the Housing Capacity Analysis (HCA). ECONorthwest assisted the City in identifying potential strategies that could be implemented to enable the City to acquire an appropriate mix of housing



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within the community. Mr. Goldman informed the Commission that the City received a grant from the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to undertake the HPS with ECONorthwest. The City also established an HPS Advisory Group, of which Commissioners KenCairn and Verner are members. Over the course of five meetings between April, 2022 and January, 2023 the HPS Advisory Group developed a report based on the information gathered, and on January 25, 2023 they recommended approval of the HPS. On February 23, 2023, the Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee (HHSAC) reviewed ECONorthwest's findings, and they unanimously recommended approval of the HPS. Mr. Goldman reminded the Commission that this meeting is a study session, and that they will not be voting on this item until their meeting on April 11, 2023.

Ms. Goodman began by detailing the scope the meeting's discussion, including funding sources, partners and adoption, and any questions or suggestions the Commission might have. She explained that the HPS was built on the HCA, and is an eight-year action plan that identifies near and long term goals to support the development of needed housing, particularly low- and middle-income housing. Ms. Goodman informed the Commission that the HHSAC prioritized a number of potential strategies to achieve this goal before recommending that the City adopt the HPS. The Council provided input to ECONorthwest regarding potential strategies back in August, 2022, which the HPS now includes. Ms. Goodman detailed feedback that her group received from local developers, who were able to prioritize potential strategies and also provide suggestions to the HPS (see attachment).

Ms. Goodman outlined the City's obligations following the adoption of the HPS, including a commitment to the implementation of strategies identified in the final HPS, and regular updates to the DLCD regarding their effectiveness. She added that the City can adopt strategies not outlined in the HPS, and would not be required to provide updates to the DLCD regarding those strategies.

Ms. Goodman discussed the Commission's role during the HPS process, specifically working with City staff to change Ashland's code enabling the development of needed housing. She then detailed ECONorthwest's strategic approach to achieving that goal, and listed a number of primary and secondary focus initiatives that could be implemented by the City:

- A. Evaluate participating in or establishing a land bank
- B. Evaluate opportunities to participate in a land trust
- C. Host educational events with the Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee
- D. Develop an equitable housing plan
- E. Disallow SFD in High Density R-3 Zones
- F. Evaluate increasing allowances for residential dwellings in commercial and employment zones
- G. Maintain quality and support development of a new manufactured home park
- H. Increase development capacity of MFR dwellings
- I. Implement the Multiple Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPTEx) to support multifamily or affordable housing



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- J. Preserve and improve existing low-cost, unregulated, rental housing
- K. Work with partners to support development of additional permanent supportive housing
- L. Evaluate opportunities to improve energy efficiency and reduce GHG emissions during housing development
- M. Establish a Construction Excise Tax
- N. Evaluate using Urban Renewal
- O. Identify additional funds to support the Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Vice Chair Verner inquired how action E would work with the Climate-Friendly Area (CFA) guidelines handed down by the state. Ms. Goodman responded that there should be no issue integrating both rulesets into the City's housing code, as a SFD would not be suitable for an area designated as a CFA. Mr. Goldman added that CFAs would be geographically specific, and that there some R-3 Zones would remain outside of CFA areas, which would be affected by action E.

Commissioner Knauer requested elaboration on the rehabilitation of manufactured homes in the City referenced in action G. Mr. Goldman related an instance where the City engaged in a weatherization program using a Community Development Block Grant in order to lower utility costs for tenants of manufactured homes. Ms. Goodman added that there is more state and federal funding for rehabilitation and weatherization of affordable housing.

Vice Chair Verner remarked that action C would be a low-impact project and was surprised at its inclusion on the list of initiatives. Ms. Goodman responded that the HHSAC felt that this action was necessary, but that it would not result in affordable housing inherently. She added that the education of residents on the importance of affordable housing can be impactful. Mr. Goldman commented that the HHSAC felt it was important to include, but ranked it lowest on their list of priorities. Vice Chair Verner asked if the City would get HPS credit for meetings that have already occurred. Mr. Goldman responded that meeting credits would be geared more towards public outreach events rather than commission meetings. He listed several educational events that the City had held in the past, such as the annual Rent-Burden Forum, stating that similar events would be reported to the DLCD in the City's progress reports. Ms. Goodman stated that the City could also engage more with the underserved part of the community as part of the HPS. She added that the City would ideally be able to get credit for meetings and outreach events that are already planned, but that it should also focus on increasing those opportunities.

Commissioner Knauer inquired how action L would apply to affordable housing, and remarked that incorporating efficient energy systems to affordable units could increase housing costs for those who are already income-burdened. Mr. Goldman responded that Councilor Bob Kaplan had suggested that the HPS look at opportunities to promote incentives for existing and new housing. The HHSAC agreed, but it was rated low on their priority list. Councilor Kaplan had requested that the timeline for these incentives be accelerated, because the dividends for energy efficient housing is not limited to the HPS. Mr. Goldman informed the Commission that the timeline for any of the



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initiatives can be accelerated or prioritized at the City's discretion. Ms. Goodman noted that the term "Housing Production Strategy" is a misnomer, as it is also about preserving existing housing and making it more affordable. Costs of heating and electricity are factored into the HPS, which is why incorporating energy efficient systems was included as a strategy to lower housing costs.

Commissioner Verner asked why the City had been given a strict timeline to implement various actions. Ms. Goodman responded that the administrative rules for the HPS require that each action be given a deadline year in order for the DLCD to review the City's implementation of its selected strategies. Ninety days after a missed deadline the City will be required to submit a report to the DLCD informing why the timeline was not able to be met, such as the City determining that the initiative was unviable, or simply delayed. Ms. Goodman remarked that the HHSAC had suggested that the timeline be more compressed, but that one of the reasons the timeline is spread out is due to the City's limited staff capacity. Mr. Goldman added that the Council and Commission would also have a difficult time accommodating a more expedited timeline.

Chair Norton stated that the shortage of land within the City contributed to rising land prices. He suggested that the City may need to be more willing to bend environmental guidelines and restrictions within the city limits to increase housing. Chair Norton called attention to street improvement requirements and the resultant rise in HOA fees as one way in which the City codes increase housing prices. He stated that the City should be willing to discuss these codes when reviewing how to reduce the cost of development in the City. He also suggested that the City should host educational events for first-time homebuyers. Commissioner KenCairn responded that the removal of environmental guidelines would lead to further environmental degradation and impact everyone. She commented that until the privileged are willing to have less, nothing will change. Chair Norton agreed, but reiterated that some rules would have to give in order to meet the City's housing goals. Vice Chair Verner agreed that the people who will be most impacted by the HPS are those with fewer privileges than the Commission members.

Commissioner Dawkins commented that the dilemma facing the Commission lies in how to achieve the balance referenced by Chair Norton. He pointed out that the Wingspread Mobile Home Park and similar developments could have been achieved greater housing density, and suggested that manufactured homes and parks be reviewed by the Commission at a future meeting. Commissioner Dawkins related how the 1960s saw an exodus of working class families from the City when the Croman Mill closed, and led to an increasing number of homes being bought by buyers from California. Vice Chair Verner agreed that this topic could be reviewed by the Commission at a future Study Session. Mr. Goldman noted that action G was listed as the highest priority item by the HHSAC and the HPS Advisory Group, and that it would begin with the adoption of the HPS. He mentioned that many members of the community have called for an increase in manufactured housing parks, despite them not resulting in dense housing.

Councilor Hyatt informed the Commission that herself and Councilor Gina DuQuenne have advocated for the development of more manufactured home parks. She detailed how there are



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manufactured home parks in both Commercial and Residential Zones within the City limits, and that the Commission would likely need to develop plans for both types at a future meeting in order to be successful. Mr. Goldman agreed, adding that there would be financial and land use avenues that would need to be considered to reach a solution.

Commissioner Knauer asked if ECONorthwest had a measurable goal that the Commission could achieve through the methods presented, and expressed concern that not having a statistically grounded goal could make success difficult to attain. Ms. Goodman responded that the various initiatives presented will dictate the strategy that the City chooses to make. She added that her organization cannot set targeted goals for the City and that the Council will need to set those targets. Commissioner Knauer asked how the City can ensure that progress does not become stagnated. Ms. Goodman stated that the focus of the initiatives and their progress will be determined by the Council.

Vice Chair Verner pointed out that the Commission is unlikely to see low-income developments come before it because high-income projects are preferred by developers. The Commission discussed how the City could direct focus and developers to the creation of low-income projects. Mr. Goldman commented that the City is limited in the exclusionary zoning that it can make to promote low-income housing. He detailed how many states have imposed rules that require developers to dedicate a proportion of housing units in a development be targeted to specific income groups, but that developers, but that some developers circumvent those rules. He added that a moratorium on the development of certain housing types could be legally problematic. Mr. Goldman outlined how the City could impose a Construction Excise Tax (CET), the funds of which could be directed towards supporting of increased opportunities for affordable ownership or rental housing for people making less than 120% area median income (AMI).

Commissioner Knauer suggested that the City set realistic, achievable goals in a concerted effort to alleviate the City's housing needs. He expressed the opinion that this would allow the HPS to progress without stagnating. Ms. Goodman agreed that the focus of the HPS is for the City to promote the development of housing directed at people making less than 120% area median income, but that a cessation on high-income developments would likely be illegal. Commissioner Knauer reiterated his concern that a lack of concrete objectives to meet could result in the City not achieving its HPS goals.

Chair Norton remarked that the New Normal Neighborhood project had not progressed since it was approved in 2015, and stated that the City should examine which codes are discouraging developers from building needed housing. He stated that street improvement and wetland standards may need to be eased in order to allow developers to build housing in the City. Commissioner KenCairn agreed that some codes should be reexamined, and suggested that some standards be divided into environmental regulations, which should be maintained, and quality of life standards, which could be more malleable. She stated that codes requiring costly improvements such as park-rows can



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discourage developers from building in the City, and that standardized rules are not suitable for some projects.

Vice Chair Verner requested that staff come before the Commission at a future Study Session about easing code requirements. Mr. Goldman responded that staff could, though it will likely require multiple Study Sessions to ascertain the feasibility of easing code requirements and reviewing whether it would positively impact development in the City. Commissioner Knauer agreed, stating that the code could be directed to encourage the development of what the City requires.

Councilor Hyatt emphasized the importance of maintaining the City's existing mobile home parks, and that the number of homes within those parks, coupled with the pursuit of zoning changes associated with those parks, would provide a metric for how many of those homes were preserved. This metric could allow the City to immediately act on the HPS when it is approved. Councilor Hyatt pointed out that this could work in concert with the energy efficiency initiative, because many people are forced into tenuous housing situations due to four main reasons; 1) death in the family; 2) unforeseen medical expenses; 3) loss of employment; 4) and being overburdened by utilities. She suggested that a nexus could be found between Commissioner Knauer's feedback and an examination of manufactured home park zoning. Ms. Goodman remarked that the HPS report does include some metrics, and that the City could easily supplement them.

Commissioner Knauer noted that the HPS does not include a metric for creating new manufactured homes and how to achieve that goal. Mr. Goldman responded that the City would establish goals and objectives for any prospective ordinance change, and in reviewing the number of units in a manufactured home park the City would identify opportunities for increasing the density of expanding the park as an objective of the ordinance. Vice Chair Verner requested that staff develop a Study Session to review mobile home parks. Mr. Goldman stated that any directive from the Council to develop an ordinance will begin with Study Sessions, and also include feedback from mobile home park owners and their residents. He remarked that the broader question of the HPS and its impact on the community over a 20-30 year period could be addressed at a future Study Session.

Chair Norton asked if the HPS would come back to the Commission in the form of a Study Session, to which Mr. Goldman responded that the Commission will next review the HPS in the form of a Public Hearing on April 11, 2023. Chair Norton noted that many of the mobile homes parks along Highway 99 North that were destroyed by the Alameda fire have not returned, and stated that the City should review why that is.

Mr. Goldman informed the Commission that the City Manager is intent on establishing a management advisory committee to reexamine existing City codes, and that staff would likely be reaching out to members of the Commission to participate in that capacity. The group would be tasked with reviewing and making recommendations of adjustments to City codes. Commissioner KenCairn expressed a desire to join the committee.



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Ms. Goodman thanked the Commission for its feedback. Vice Chair Verner stated that the Council will have until June 30, 2023 to adopt the HPS.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION

Chair Norton advised that any advisory committee should garner input from members of the public who are affected by the code, particularly Commissioners Herron and KenCairn who engage with it in a professional capacity.

Commissioner Herron related his experience speaking with housing developers and their desire for the City to create avenues for the use of prefabricated homes, which could lower building timelines and construction costs without compromising quality of life. Commissioner Herron noted that prefabricated homes are made with similar materials as a standard dwelling, and asked if staff had any updates regarding their use in the City. Mr. Goldman stated that the City does not distinguish between a prefabricated home and a stick-built home, and that they can be approved by land use on any lot that can accommodate a single-family dwelling. Any impediments to the use of manufactured or prefabricated homes would originate from the state Building Codes Division, and any changes to those guidelines would then need to be adopted by the City. Commissioner Herron asked who would inspect the pre-installed electrical work in manufactured homes. Mr. Goldman responded that it was his understanding that there is an inspector in the factory itself.

Commissioner Herron stated that he had not observed a noticeable impact on the recent state guidelines regarding parking, but that it did allow for more flexible use of commercial spaces than before. He remarked that large parking areas may not provide the same benefit for a business as when the parking guidelines were first instituted, and that the new guidelines could benefit the City. Chair Norton agreed that rules written 30 years prior may not be as applicable today.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

*Submitted by,
Michael Sullivan, Executive Assistant*