

CITY OF COOS BAY
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Tuesday, October 8, 2013 at 6:00 P.M.
Coos Bay City Hall, 500 Central Avenue, Coos Bay

DRAFT

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSIONERS: Chairman Chris Hood, Commissioners Jim Berg, Christine Coles, Bruce Harlan, Phil Marler, Rex Miller and Jeff Marineau

STAFF: Eric Day, Director of Community Development
Aaron Harris, Planner 1

SIGNED-IN GUESTS: None

CCI/PUBLIC COMMENTS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the Planning Commission minutes of August 13, 2013.

MOTION: Commissioner Berg – Approve the Planning Commission minutes of August 13, 2013 as submitted.

SECOND: Commissioner Coles

VOTE: Unanimous

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Miller

PUBLIC HEARING

ITEM A: Variance 187-ZON13-022 (Continuation)

The applicant was requesting approval of a variance to the off-street parking requirements for “Religious Assembly - Large”. This item is continued from the August 13, 2013 Planning Commission hearing.

Chairman Hood asked if there were any objections to the Planning Commission hearing the item on jurisdictional grounds. He asked if any Planning Commissioner had exparte contact or conflict of interest to report.

Chairman Hood opened the public hearing.

Eric Day informed the Planning Commission that the applicant withdrew their request. The applicants will meet the off-street parking demand through parking agreements with property owners within 300-feet of the subject property.

ITEM B: Amendment #187-ZON13-020 The applicants, Jon and Patricia Webster, are requesting approval to expand the existing parking lot assessment district to include 165 North 5th Street and 540 Anderson Avenue.

Chairman Hood asked if there were any objections to the Planning Commission hearing the item on jurisdictional grounds. He asked if any Planning Commissioners had any ex parte contacts or conflicts of interest to report. None were reported.

Chairman Hood opened the public hearing.

Director Day read the disclosure statement and outlined that applicant's request. Applicants Mr. and Mrs. Webster are requesting approval to expand the existing parking lot assessment district to include 165 North 5th Street and 540 Anderson Avenue.

Commissioners Hood notes poor disrepair and other issues associated with local structures; that the parking district is not currently full; and asks if we currently, or if we will soon have, issues regarding the downtown parking district.

Commissioner Berg states he is concerned the City's small businesses will move elsewhere; that with or without the parking district, build-out of the second and third floors of buildings downtown will result in insufficient parking; and that we should encourage business and focus on retention instead of a future need that may or may not exist.

Director Day responds that staff isn't making statements about if we do or do not have current parking issues. Staff and Planning Commission are charged to make determinations using the existing code.

Commissioner Berg notes that maybe we need to look at the letter of the law if it hinders us instead of helps us. Further, we can enforce our codes and not be where we want to be.

Commissioner Hood expresses he has greater concerns about the way that the district was established and the other businesses in the parking district that did pay. Commissioner Hood asks how the parking district was developed to begin with.

Director Day stated businesses were charged a tax assessment. The amount businesses were charged varied, but it was a pretty substantial amount. I don't believe we're asking new businesses that request inclusion to pay anything.

Commissioner Berg comments that the reason the assessment was made was that they took away parking when the Coos Bay mall was developed. A system was put in place to give it back.

Director Day responds that the assessment was based on parking improvements.

Commissioner Berg asks if any additional businesses have been allowed into parking district since it was established.

Director Day responds in the affirmative. At the time of the decision, economic development was the sole criteria. Director Day adds that he wishes they had included criteria for people who wanted to be included in the parking district due to huge parking issues and costs at the time of build-out.

Commissioner Hood stated that receiving an addendum, hours prior to the Planning Commission meeting is "really something we don't like." Commissioner Marler asks if the properties currently included pay an additional assessment.

Director Day says no.

Commissioner Marler asks if there is specific criteria for those included in the parking district.

Commissioner Hood asks if all the property is private. Director Day answers that the property is public and private.

Michelle Turner, the applicant's representative, explains that John and Patricia Webster are the building owners and that their business is in a potential growth period. Without an expansion of the parking district, the owners may have to consider relocation and evicting other businesses on their property.

Commissioner Hood asks if an expansion would take up existing parking spaces. Ms. Turner answered that it could.

Commissioner Hood and Commissioner Berg comment about how adding employees does not increase off-street parking requirements while expansion of a structure does.

Commissioner Hood closes the public hearing.

MOTION: Commissioner Coles - Continue hearing at next Planning Commission meeting for application #187-ZON13-014.

SECOND: Commissioner Marineau

DISCUSSION: The planning commissioners discussed expansions to the district and any costs associated with those expansions. Commissioner Hood made comments about the need to take a look at a comprehensive plan for downtown and discussion about build-out.

Director Day asserts that from staff's level, he agrees with everything everyone is saying. In the long-term, maybe a comprehensive plan for Downtown is exactly what is needed. He would have a very hard time writing findings in support of the applicant that were legally defensible because he is not certain what they would be.

Commissioner Hood notes that applicant could waive 120 day timeline. Ms. Turner, the applicant's representative, agreed to waive the 120 day timeline.

Commissioners Hood expresses his support for existing businesses rather than create a situation that pushes them out. Commissioner Marineau requests more background on the application. Commissioner Marler adds that he is uncomfortable that, faced with this same situation last year, the request to expand the parking district was granted. Commissioner Marler suggests that code may be flawed and needs changing. Commissioner Coles makes a motion to continue the hearing on November 12th. Commissioner Marineau seconds the motion.

Commissioner Hood suggests a work session and possibly inviting City Council.

VOTE: Unanimous

ADMINISTRATIVE

ITEM C: Discussion regarding amendments to land development and land use fees.

Commissioners discuss comparison fees. Commissioner Marineau expresses concern with comparisons that are not coastal cities or Roseburg. Commissioner Berg and Commissioner Harlan express concern about the effects of higher fees and the generation of funds.

Commissioner Hood comments that raising land use fees is essentially another form of taxation to get money into the coffers of Coos Bay. He contends that it focuses on those who want to go out and do something in our community. Further, the land use process was established to protect the general public. He contends that if people want regulations, citizens should pay for them as a whole.

Commissioner Berg adds that the ease and cost of working with the City is important to developers. It doesn't make sense to add this level of responsibility to the home owner or developer. The risk is greater here, the return is smaller. Commissioner Hood adds that staff reserving the right to charge the true cost of review bother him. "We're at the mercy of our planners as to how much of a process is deemed necessary". Commissioner Hood asserts that by keeping fees down it encourages development. A streamlined process gets people in and out as quick as possible. Commissioner Hood says he likes the idea about where we can cut instead of how we can grow an empire for extended fees.

Commissioners continue discussion of land use fees. Commissioner Hood says no decisions or recommendations will be made until next month's meeting. Commissioner Marler expresses interest in more information from Bandon about whether their increased fees have helped or hurt the community. Commissioner Marineau asks for West Linn and Ashland to be deleted from the comparisons list. Commissioner Coles requests Brookings and other coastal communities be added to the cost comparison chart.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

NONE

STAFF COMMENTS

Director Day welcomes Commissioner Miller back to the Planning Committee.

ADJOURNMENT 7:33 p.m.

Chris Hood, Chairman
City of Coos Bay
Coos County, Oregon

ATTEST:

Aaron Harris, Planner, City of Coos Bay