

**CITY OF BLAINE**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Thursday, January 25, 2018**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Calvin Armerding - Chair**

**A. CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM**

**B. ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:** Steve Hrutfiord, Richard May, Calvin Armerding, Kevin Owens,  
Sue Sturgill, Larry Wonnacott

**ABSENT:** John LeBrun

**STAFF:** Community Development Director, Michael Jones  
Community Planner I, Maddie Ottley

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER STURGILL, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER  
WONNACOTT TO EXCUSE COMMISSIONER LEBRUN, APPROVED  
UNANIMOUSLY (6-0).**

**C. AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None.

**D. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Downtown Design Standards

Mr. Jones stated that staff has hired the company Makers to help illustrate and craft new downtown design standards. Mr. Jones noted that the Commission reviewed similar proposed design standards a few years ago, but those standards were never implemented due to legal reasons.

Mr. Jones noted how the new design code is to be organized; based on type of building frontage.

The Commission then asked staff several questions regarding how residential development would function within the “storefront” section of street designations.

Mr. Jones responded, noting different frontage types like stoop or landscaping would apply to development of residences.

Mr. Jones then noted that Makers has highlighted current standards that are stringent, and subsequently cost prohibitive for developers to build. Mr. Jones also stated that Makers noted that allowing for parking on the west side of Peace Portal could help preserve view corridors. Mr. Jones added that Makers has also suggested allowing development of

parking areas on the side of buildings, while retaining a main store front along the Peace Portal sidewalk.

Commissioner May expressed his concern for breaks in building frontages, but noted requiring main entrances to be located along Peace Portal Drive could resolve his concern.

Mr. Jones asked the commission if they wanted to limit the maximum frontage for parking access.

Commissioner May stated that he would be in favor establishing a maximum.

Chairperson Armerding asked for staff to evaluate how the maximum would be regulated; per property, building, etc.

Commissioner Owens asked staff's opinion about willingness of the public to walk from a consolidated parking area to shopping.

Mr. Jones responded, noting that as a general rule people are not willing to walk more than a quarter mile to a destination but the standard can vary based on the quality of the pedestrian space.

Commissioner Owens noted that he would be in favor of allowing for parking spaces to be used as pedestrian spaces like seen in San Francisco.

Mr. Jones responded, noting that the travel lane of Peace Portal Drive is regulated by Washington State Department of Transportation, however the City is contemplating eliminating parking, extending curbs, and allowing for large sidewalks, which could then be used by businesses.

Mr. Jones then added that current building size standards require 65-75 feet in width, which Makers has noted is also development prohibitive due to cost of elevator installation on relatively small buildings. Mr. Jones noted that Makers has suggested allowing for a much larger building, but regulate how building frontages are constructed to look like 25-35 foot building faces.

The Commissioners noted their general approval of this.

Mr. Jones then noted that currently developers are required to construct a portion of the boardwalk along the back side of building on the west side of Peace Portal Drive from G Street to Martin Street. Mr. Jones stated that Makers has suggested the possibility of completely eliminating this requirement. This is due to cost burden on developers, and idea of private condos being located on a boardwalk which may not be favorable to developers or the City. Mr. Jones added that Makers has made suggestions regarding City purchasing of select properties to retain view corridors.

Mr. Jones then asked for questions.

Commissioner Sturgill expressed her concern regarding all residential development and suggested requiring a minimum commercial area for buildings.

Commissioner Owens asked several questions regarding effect of new rules on existing buildings, which Mr. Jones responded to noting the main effect could be maintenance of building facades and store front windows.

Commissioner Wonnacott asked the Commission and staff to think about how parking will be functioning in the next 20 years when developing the new standards.

Chairperson Armerding noted that there is always the possibility of allowing for parking lots to be redeveloped into building areas if parking need is reduced in the future.

Commissioner Hrutfiord noted he is in favor of no longer requiring developers to build part of the board, and would like to see larger sidewalk and pedestrian areas along Peace Portal Drive.

Commissioner Hrutfiord also inquired about area behind buildings on west side of Peace Portal Drive.

Mr. Jones responded, noting the properties extend from Peace Portal to the railroad right-of-way. However, the city has a 20' easement along the rear for access and utilities, which could be improved and parking created.

Commissioner Sturgill asked about requiring standards of the back of buildings on the west side of Peace Portal Drive.

Mr. Jones noted for new construction there are current standards. However, improvement could be facilitated through grants to property or business owners.

There was a discussion of the same concept being applied to the back of buildings abutting an alley or parking lot on the east side of Peace Portal Drive.

Commissioner Owens encouraged staff to conduct public outreach regarding the proposed standards because they are exciting and positive. Commissioner Owens also encouraged staff to work with the new downtown organization.

The Commission agreed, noting open houses compared to public hearings could lead to more positive dialogue.

## **E. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

### Study Session with Council

Mr. Jones noted two new council members have been appointed, and a joint meeting will be scheduled for late spring.

Semiahmoo Resort Association Letter

Mr. Jones noted no action is required, but a letter was sent to the Planning Commission regarding development of Tract D within the Seasmoke Planned Unit Development in Semiahmoo.

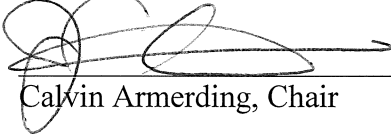
Mr. Jones summarized, the letter which is requests the City obtain Tract D and hold the property in a conservation easement.


Staff and the Commission held a discussion on the letter.

**F. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER MAY, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OWENS, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 11, 2018, APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0-1) WONNACOTT ABSTAINS.**

**G. ADJOURNMENT 8:23 PM.**

  
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Calvin Armerding, Chair

  
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Michael Jones, Staff

Planning Commission minutes of January 25, 2018 to be approved at the February 8, 2018 Planning Commission meeting.