

CITY OF BLAINE
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Thursday, April 12, 2018
7:00 PM
Calvin Armerding - Chair

A. CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM

B. ROLL CALL:

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

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Community Planner II, Alex Wenger
Community Planner I, Madeline Ottley

C. AUDIENCE COMMENTS: None.

D. PUBLIC HEARING

Plaza Building

Chairperson Armerding read the rules for a public hearing.

Mr. Wenger introduced the proposal, and summarized the planned improvements to the site and building at 685 Peace Portal Drive. Mr. Wenger stated that proposal is subject to a Shoreline Substantial Development permit and Variance permit. Mr. Wenger then described the applicable development and shoreline regulations and juxtaposed the proposal.

Mr. Wenger then highlighted the variance request to eliminate the required onsite parking stalls for the residential units and compared the request to the variance approval criteria. Mr. Wenger noted staff is not making a recommendation on the variance request and highlighted Council has initiated a resolution to evaluate changes to the parking code; however no changes have been finalized.

Mr. Wenger then spoke about adding the access road to the project site to the Transportation Improvement Plan.

Mr. Wenger concluded by noting proposed conditions of approval.

Roger Axel - 3008 Eldridge Avenue Bellingham WA- Project Architect - Introduced himself and spoke about cost and difficulties associated with creation of access road to subject site.

Commissioner Owens asked about several references made in staff report in regards to gravel access lane on east of the property. Mr. Wenger noted this is an error, and the gravel lane is on the west side of the property.

Commissioner Lebrun inquired about proposed condition number two within the staff report relating to construction of the boardwalk, based on subsequent review of downtown design standards which may eliminate requirement. Mr. Jones responded, stating the code has not been changed yet.

Chairperson Armerding inquired about conditioning future construction of parking stalls pending future improvement of the access easement.

Mr. Wenger stated this is a possible condition the Commission could require.

The Board and staff held a discussion regarding access to the subject site and on-site stalls.

Commissioner May inquired about minimum transparency requirements for frontage.

Mr. Jones responded, noting the requirement addresses pedestrian friendly features and is not solely based on transparency. Mr. Jones added a significant amount of windows are being added to south and west sides of the building which were accounted for in design departure.

Commissioner Wonnacott asked staff to address potential changes to parking requirements. Mr. Wenger responded, noting City Council identified an issue with the parking requirements and asked staff to research and propose a draft code amendment.

Mr. Axel provided background on existing and previously proposed on site stalls.

Commissioner Lebrun asked about the possibility of requiring the property owner to construct three onsite parking stalls after completion of construction of the access alley.

Commissioner Hrutfiord expressed his support of Commissioner Lebrun's previous sentiment.

Commissioner Sturgill asked about adding the access alley improvements to the City Transportation Improvement Plan, and potential funding sources. Mr. Jones responded.

The Board and staff held a discussion about possible funding sources for improvement of the access alley, which highlighted how private funding could be required.

Commissioner Sturgill asked staff how granting variance request could set precedence. Mr. Jones responded, highlighting the unique circumstances of the site and properties on the west side of Peace Portal Drive.

Commissioner Hrutfiord – asked about stairwell from plaza and public access to backside of building into public access easement.

Mr. Wenger highlighted the stairwell is a public facility, and public access to the easement is a possibility in the future pending improvements.

Commissioner May inquired about lower access to the building. The applicant explained.

Commissioner Owens – Are there any parking restrictions on street for overnight parking?

Wenger – No, city council is authority on this.

Armerding – Asked about requiring applicant to kick in cost of development

Wenger No protest to LID, mean if there was an LID vote would count as an automatic yes

Jones - LID is if city initiated improvement, in lieu fee could also be a possibility.

Chairperson Armerding noted the following based on the discussion:

- Parking required later
- Finding of fact based on size of property
- No protest to LID

Sturgill – noted wanting to talk about easement for boardwalk

Mr. Wenger - Noted it is shown on proposed site plan, which suffices.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER MAY, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER LEBRUN, TO APPROVE THE SHORELINE SUBSTANTIAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AND VARIANCE PERMIT AS AMENDED.

Mr. Wenger stated that three amendments as follows:

New Conclusion of Law

5. The Commission considered the narrow lot width of 25 feet, the physical constraints of providing vehicle access to the property and the length of the required access lane when granting the Variance approval.

New Specific Conditions of approval

5. Upon completion of the access lane to the west of the property and acceptance by the Public Works Department, the property shall be improved to provide 3 parking stalls onsite.
6. Prior to approval of occupancy, the property owner shall sign a No Protest to LID Agreement for improving the 20-foot wide access lane to the west of the property or the Peace Portal West Alley.

MOTION IS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0).

Chairperson Armerding closed the public hearing.

Downtown Design Standards Review

Mr. Jones noted the Commission has already held two public meetings, and introduced Community Development and Tourism Coordinator, Debbie Harger to discuss building color regulations.

Ms. Harger described the history of downtown design color regulations and the proposed color update.

The Board and staff held a discussion regarding the proposed changes.

It was agreed to have staff edit the proposed chart to clarify what colors are prohibited, and what is allowed for accent features.

Chairperson Armerding closed the public hearing.

E. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

The April 12, 2018 is the last Planning Commission meeting for Commissioner Wonnacott. Mr. Jones and the Commissioner thanked Commissioner Wonnacott for his time on the Planning Commission.

F. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER MAY, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OWENS, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 22, 2018 AS AMENDED, APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0).

G. ADJOURNMENT 9:07 PM

Calvin Armerding, Chair

Alex Wenger, Staff

Planning Commission minutes of April 12, 2018 to be approved at the April 26, 2018 Planning Commission meeting.