

Agenda
Planning Commission
Committee of the Whole
CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU
Ben Haight, Chairman
November 26, 2019

I. ROLL CALL

Ben Haight, Chairman, called the Committee of the Whole Meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Planning Commission (PC), held in the Assembly Chambers of the Municipal Building, to order at 6:06 p.m.

Commissioners present: Ben Haight, Chairman; Paul Voelckers, Vice Chairman; Michael LeVine, Nathaniel Dye, Ken Alper, Shannon Crossley, Dan Hickok, Travis Arndt, Weston Eiler

Commissioners absent:

Staff present: Alix Pierce, Acting CDD Director; Tim Felstead, Planner; Emily Wright, CBJ Legal Counsel

Assembly members: Greg Smith

II. REGULAR AGENDA

A. CSP2019 0012: Planning Commission Recommendations for FY 2021-2026 Capital Improvement Program

Chairman Haight introduced the item on the agenda, stating that, in the packet provided to the Planning Commission, there was a letter authored by a group of commissioners including Mr. Voelckers, Mr. LeVine, Mr. Hickok, and Mr. Eiler. Mr. Haight invited Mr. Felstead to make a presentation. Mr. Felstead declined, saying that this was a time for the Commissioners to discuss the content of the letter.

Prior to opening discussion on Mr. Felstead's letter on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Ms. Crossley declared that Mr. Felstead is her first cousin.

Mr. Haight opened the discussion of the letter by asking if there were any comments for Mr. Felstead. Mr. Voelckers stated that he would begin the discussion by describing what had recently changed in the letter. The changes he highlighted are as follows:

1. The first couple of sentences contained minor rewrites for context.
2. The third and fourth paragraphs are new additions.
 - a. The third paragraph highlights hopes for future successful plans and notes some past achievements.
 - b. The fourth paragraph explains the broad role of the Planning Commission, as opposed to the specific agenda of other subcommittees.
3. A few words were added to the top of page 3 to make it more specific.
4. On page 4, a section on sustainability was added.

Mr. Voelckers commented that he hoped that it would be possible for the Planning Commission process to start six weeks earlier in 2020. He posited that, by starting earlier, they might be able to better involve the public. He emphasized the importance of community input by mentioning several parts of the Comprehensive Plan which had been rewritten due to the extensive community involvement in the Blueprint Downtown project. He additionally noted that he believed that the sustainability section added to page 4 didn't rise to the same level as the other changes.

Mr. LeVine stated that the reformulation of the letter is part of an ongoing effort for the Planning Commission to be proactive in explaining what they do, and to allow community participation. He highlighted the importance of calling attention to any changes that have been made. Mr. LeVine further suggested that they add a sentence or two in the third paragraph to make it clear that the successes mentioned are successes for the community, and not just for the Planning Commission. He said he believes Mr. Voelckers is correct in saying that the successes are important, but that they need to take it a step further.

Redirecting the conversation back to the proposal of beginning the process six weeks earlier next year, Mr. Voelckers cited concern over how to best ensure that the process began in late September in order to gain community input.

Ms. Pierce replied that the Community Development Department (CDD) has been working on their internal process in regards to that question, as well as in regards to getting other City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) departments more involved. She stated that she wasn't sure at what stage in the process it would be most appropriate to involve the public. She also posed the question of whether the process of involving the public should be open-ended, or if there should be some side-boards involved in what topics would be up for public discussion.

Mr. Voelckers agreed with Ms. Pierce's comments, but stated that he thinks that the Planning Commission needs to be self-initiating.

Mr. LeVine said that he thought that part of the successes of this year had to do with the amount of public input. He suggested that it might be possible to find a way to push the public input process earlier.

Ms. Crossley reminded the Planning Commission that the Historic Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC) also submitted a letter for recommendation in regards to the FY 2021-2026 Capital Improvement Program.

Mr. Arndt asked Mr. Felstead when CBJ Engineering generally asks for the Capital Improvement Program letter.

Mr. Felstead replied that this year it occurred in November, but that there are ways to schedule it earlier.

Mr. Arndt suggested that they plan to go over next year's letter in July or August, and to schedule a meeting for that purpose.

Ms. Crossley stated that the HRAC committee was asked about their recommendations on November 6, 2019 so she didn't think that the Planning Committee would have ever seen their letter.

Mr. Haight suggested that they have a meeting to talk about what they gained from the letter for the CIP. Mr. Voelckers agreed that this should happen in July, and suggested to start a subcommittee.

Ms. Pierce stated that this echoed her recommendation. She added that she thought they needed to spend some time at the beginning of next year establishing a process, if they're going to start early.

Mr. LeVine suggested having a standing CIP committee in order to be more proactive, instead of waiting for Mr. Felstead's report next year to take action.

Ms. Crossley voiced her agreement. She highlighted the importance of giving committees, such as HRAC, the ability to state their recommendations earlier in the process. She brought up the issues with the City Museum's archives as an example of an issue that is important but might get less attention than other projects.

Mr. Arndt suggested designating the second meeting of each year as a public meeting.

Mr. LeVine agreed with Mr. Arndt's suggestion, adding that the benefit of having a standing committee is making sure that public meetings happen.

Mr. Haight asked if anything regarding this subject needs to be added to the Capital Improvement Program letter.

Mr. LeVine stated that he thought that these were internal discussions that didn't necessarily need to go into the letter, but which should be put into action nonetheless.

Ms. Pierce suggested that they expand the Process section with some of the recommendations on early public input.

Mr. Voelckers agreed, stating that since the letter is addressed to Engineering and to the Assembly, it would be helpful to note that early public input is a working goal for the Planning Commission.

Mr. LeVine said that he thought the revision to the Comprehensive Plan was one of the more substantive additions to the letter, and that they ought to add two sentences saying that they support and encourage the CDD to move forward with the revision to the Comprehensive Plan. He acknowledged that the funding for that is not coming through the CIP but that this is an opportunity for them to highlight the importance of this part of the process, and to make sure that the funding for this moves forward.

Mr. Voelckers asked about the state of the funding situation. Mr. LeVine responded that the first year's funding is allocated, but the second year's funding needs to be approved by the Assembly.

Ms. Pierce replied that this assertion was correct, but that the CDD hasn't heard anything from the Assembly regarding any budget cuts to that section.

Commissioner Eiler arrived at 6:29 p.m.

On the subject of Community Vitality, Mr. LeVine asked if they would add the Auke Bay Area Plan to the Lemon Creek Plan.

Mr. Felstead stated that there are roughly \$15 million identified for future funding for the area plans. He noted that some of the ideas to come out of the Auke Bay Plan were related to way-finding and signage, and suggested that they may want to look for some of the other specific improvements that were identified in both the Auke Bay and the Lemon Creek plans.

Mr. Voelckers noted that he was a liaison for the Lemon Creek Plan and was therefore heavily involved in the process of creating it. He said he knew that the Lemon Creek Plan included specific priorities and action items, as well as responsible parties for who would make those things happen. He stated that he wasn't sure if the Auke Bay Plan was as specific as the Lemon

Creek Plan, but he agreed that the idea of adding the Auke Bay Plan to the Lemon Creek Plan was a good philosophical goal.

Ms. Pierce said that she believes there is value in highlighting the line items for implementation measures for the Auke Bay Plan, even if they are slotted for future funding. She suggested that the Lemon Creek funding be moved into the six-year CIP rather than keep the current nebulous timeframe for future funding.

Mr. Felstead directed the Planning Commission to Attachment C of the memo, which is a list of potential Capital Improvement Program projects that CDD staff had pulled out of a number of plans, with page 17 of Attachment C corresponding to the Lemon Creek Area Plan and with page 15 corresponding to the Auke Bay Area Plan.

Mr. LeVine asked if it's worth considering adding the items identified in Attachment C to the CIP.

Mr. Felstead said that it would be a possibility to add them as an attachment to their memorandum if they wanted to give examples of specific projects.

Mr. Eiler asked if it would be better to prioritize the items in the Auke Bay Plan over the Lemon Creek Plan, given all of the recent developments in Auke Bay.

Ms. Pierce responded that it was more prudent to recommend Lemon Creek infrastructure projects because part of the implementation of the Auke Bay Area Plan that the CDD has been working on is the new zoning. She stated that there are a lot of plan routes for Auke Bay that will make more sense with the new zoning than they do currently.

Mr. Dye referenced the Lemon Creek Plan and asked if there is a sense of what mid-, short-, and long-term means in terms of actual timeframe. He also brought attention to the fact that the expiration on the timeframe in which short-term projects in the Auke Bay plan should be completed is 2021, and that this might impact which plan they prioritize.

Mr. Voelckers explained that, generally, short-term means two years, mid-term means five or six years, and long-term means an unspecified length of time. He made a personal note that he feels that Lemon Creek has been often overlooked by the CIP. He noted the lack of infrastructure for children, in particular.

Mr. Pierce stated that there has been some progress on implementing trail and park projects in Lemon Creek. She referenced the improvements to the Switzer/Marriott Trail and to the existing playground in that area, and that they're looking at another playground site.

Mr. Dye said that he thought it was important to highlight the neighborhood plans since they are adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan. He stated that he struggled with the idea of putting the Auke Bay Plan aside simply because it's not ready yet, because there seem to be some projects that consistently get pushed to future dates. He stated that he thought aspects of the neighborhood plans should be elevated to specific bullet points in the Capital Improvement Program letter.

Mr. LeVine echoed Mr. Dye's suggestion to reformulate the letter to include specific points from the neighborhood plans. He also stated that he thought the previously suggested subcommittee could communicate with neighborhood liaisons and come up with prioritizations for these bullet points. He thought it would be most appropriate for next year's CIP letter.

Ms. Pierce agreed and suggested adding a bullet point section for all three area plans to maintain balance.

Mr. Dye asked if the Affordable Housing Commission was dissolved by the Assembly, and if it was important to list, under the first Housing bullet point, that there were recommendations that hadn't been implemented.

Mr. Felstead said that his understanding of the situation was that the Affordable Housing Commission was disbanded because the plan effectively laid out what the Commission was trying to achieve.

Regarding the Sustainability section of the letter, Mr. Dye asked about the wording regarding working towards greater hydro-utilization, stating that he wasn't sure what it was trying to say. Mr. LeVine echoed Mr. Dye's sentiments.

Mr. Voelckers explained that the intent was to change Juneau's sources, where practical, from diesel to hydro.

Mr. LeVine said that they should figure out how to reword this section to focus on heating and transportation.

Mr. Dye agreed and said that they should also include the economic reality of switching to locally-produced renewable energies.

Mr. Alper asked if the land identified for future use as community gardens was owned by CBJ.

Ms. Pierce noted that there were a few sites in the Parks & Rec Master Plan that are recommended for development of community gardens.

Mr. Dye suggested adding another project under Community Vitality, which he took from the Auke Bay Plan: plan routes for a future street grid in the Auke Bay Center planning area. He nominated Mr. Voelckers to add this to the letter. When asked to clarify the project, Mr. Dye explained that the Auke Bay plan talks about a street grid structure that doesn't exist and some new roads and more frontage, theorizing a possible future neighborhood road between Glacier Highway and Auke Bay, close to the central hub of Auke Bay.

Ms. Crossley asked whether the recent 1% sales tax funds and/or property tax abatement should be explored as appropriate funding sources for housing.

Mr. Voelckers said that there have been some initiatives regarding the city's legal authority to defer taxes, for example, and that there have been some suggestions for potential fund sources.

Ms. Crossley asked for clarification regarding under-utilized existing properties, and whether that was only for new builds or if it was in regards to perseveration and reconstruction work.

Mr. Felstead said that the CDD was working with the Housing Officer on an Upstairs Downtown project to try and bring some of the additional stories above commercial spaces downtown into residential use. He said that a number of properties have been identified and that the CDD is still working on what mechanisms they can introduce to encourage that residential use.

Mr. Haight stated that they're bringing the letter to the full commission on December 10th, and suggested that the final draft be finished by December 3rd.

Mr. LeVine stated that, if he was provided with the correct information, he was willing to make the proposed revisions and distribute the letter back to the subcommittee.

III. **OTHER BUSINESS** - None

IV. **REPORT OF REGULAR AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES** - None

V. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.