

Memorandum

TO: SeaTac City Council
FROM: SeaTac Planning Commission
REGARDING: Operating procedures
DATE: February 24, 2013

SeaTac City Council Members,

During regular meetings of the SeaTac Planning Commission Feb. 5 and 19, 2013, commissioners present held substantive discussions on the processes the Planning Commission, Zoning Code Ad Hoc Committee, City Council and staff followed recently in developing and reviewing proposed amendments to the City Zoning Code.

We are writing to share our concerns as well as our hope that moving forward the Commission will receive clear direction and ongoing communication from the Council when embarking on major projects. Our goal is to begin a dialogue between the Commission and Council to create a more productive workflow.

Given the wide variety of challenges facing the City of SeaTac, like other municipalities in our region, there is too much at stake for the future of our city, home, and place of business, to not accomplish the City's objectives for the good of the residents of the City of SeaTac.

Our initial concern stems from the lack of comprehensive discussion about the recently proposed "Park and Fly" zoning code, especially in light of the great deal of staff and volunteer time that went into it's creation.

However, instead of dwelling on one particular occurrence we would like to relay our overall objective, not specific to the lack of Council direction or discussion on the policy itself, but the process by which it was handled. By addressing these issues we can work to facilitate an increasingly meaningful and productive relationship moving forward.

Below are some of the important details about the Ad Hoc Committee work pertinent to this dialogue:

- The Zoning code Ad Hoc Committee was wholly inclusive - members of City Council, business community, Planning Commissioners, residents, etc., were involved in primary discussions and final policy negotiations.
- The Park-and-Fly code was the primary driver of the workload in the Ad Hoc Committee.
- The majority of members on the current City Council were not amenable to the proposed changes.

- Despite a multitude of opportunities - staff briefings at study sessions, City Council meetings, council retreats, special meetings, briefings and work before the Planning Commission, as well as the time spent developing the proposal in the Ad Hoc Committee, it was not communicated to stakeholders that the direction of the proposed code did not meet the expectations or interests of the current City Council.

We would like to make sure that in the future the Planning Commission has clear initial direction and goals throughout any major undertaking and would like to express our interest in open communication throughout these processes.

As a research and policy arm of the City Council – as we are appointed by and serve under the direction of the Council – we wish to meaningfully provide insight and support for work before the Council.

However, after specific issues that arose with the Park-and-Fly process and more generally during the past year, our desire for open communication is necessary for the Planning Commission to be an effective and helpful tool for the Council.

There is a great cost to implementing public policy:

- City staff are necessary and continue to be an incredibly valuable asset throughout our proceedings. A great deal of staff time, and therefore taxpayer dollars, have been essentially wasted as multiple staffers spent countless hours on work specific to the and Park-and-Fly sections of the Zoning Code.
- Volunteers, including non-council members of the Ad Hoc Committee and the Planning Commission, have spent a great deal of time sharing their goals and concerns throughout the entire process.
- Completing a SEPA review is an arduous process that requires money and staff time and in this case outside consultants.
- Just as important as time, which can be easily quantified, is the non-quantifiable “business climate” as perceived by landowners, developers and other stakeholders. Any entity that gains a reputation, deserved or not, as inconsistent in policies and incongruous interactions with outside entities, is fairly or unfairly going to face a stigma that can be devastating to economic development.
- In addition to the cost of time for the work of City Council members, City staff, Planning Commissioners and stakeholders, is the cost of what could have been accomplished during that time had involved parties had adequate initial direction, consensus and open communication throughout the policy-making process from the City Council.

Members of the Planning Commission who have signed below, sincerely enjoy serving on behalf of the Council in order to achieve what we believe are shared objectives - to make the City of SeaTac a great place to live and work.

We believe it would be productive to hold a joint meeting of the City Council and Planning Commission to review our processes, develop more effective communication channels, share our goals and gain a mutual understanding of our expectations in order to be more successful and helpful to the Council.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for the time you dedicate to our City and we look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

The City of SeaTac Planning Commission

Daryl Tapio, Chair

Roxie Chapin, Vice Chair

Tom Dantzler

Joe Adamack

Jim Todd

cc: Todd Cutts, City Manager
Gwen Voelpel, Assistant City Manager
Joe Scorcio, Community and Economic Development Director