



Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

City Hall Council Chambers
700 Highway 2, Leavenworth, WA

Wednesday, September 2, 2020 at 6:30 PM

OPEN OF THE MEETING: Andy Lane, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

ROLL CALL: Andy Lane (Chair), Steven Booher, Alison Miller, and Angela Harrison. Absent: Colin Forsyth, Pete Olson and Chuck Reppas

STAFF: Lilith Vespier, Development Services Manager, Chantell Steiner, Finance Director, Devyn Walter, Intern and Dawn Couch, BERK Consulting

COUNCIL Members: Anne Hessburg, Sharon Waters, Carolyn Wilson, Clint Strand and Mayor Carl Florea

COMMUNITY Present via Zoom: Jessica Stoller, Marty Fallon, Bob, Bruce Williams, Sue Cragun, Carolyn Wilson, Ana Cortez-Steiner, Alicia McRae, John Olson, Tony Cameron, Ann Crosby, Kaylin Bettinger, Duane Goehner, Marso (unknown last name), Stella Day, David Morgan, Janet Millard, Jake Mayson, and Margaret (unknown last name).

COMMUNITY Present at City Hall: Roy Vespier and Skip Laeson

Review and approval of Planning Commission Minutes: Alison Miller moved to approve August 5, 2020 and August 19, 2020; Angie Harrison seconded; approved by all.

Joint Planning Commission and Council review of the 2020 Docket projects: Development Services Manager Lilith Vespier started out the evening with discussion of the 2020 Docket. The first item was the transportation element update. The first meeting was two weeks ago. The next transportation meeting will be in the middle of September for envisioning and goals. Chair Lane said he liked the opening meeting and public engagement. Commissioner Harrison stated that she has been contacted by people who would like more of a pedestrian and cycling aspect to the downtown. They also liked the option of using alternative peak hour reporting. Mayor Florea said that he appreciated the honest ramifications of peak traffic options between the weekdays and weekends. Councilmember Hessburg asked when the Transportation Element update would be completed. Ms. Vespier said that the timeline for completion by December.

Item 2 on the Docket is the Housing Action Plan. Ms. Vespier stated that the housing action plan is moving forward including tonight's meeting on housing types (missing middle) and housing data. Chair Lane noted that the Housing Needs Assessment had a lot of good data. Commissioner Booher noted that the Housing Needs Assessment had good data and surprises. Ms. Vespier asked the Council if there were questions on that process. Councilmember Wilson stated she was looking forward to tonight's workshop.

Item 3 on the Docket is the Fire code amendments. Mark Barnes and Dave Nalle have meet with the County and Department of Natural Resources to review the fire hazard map and will be working on code amendments which should be to the Council by the end of the year.

Item 4 on the Docket is the Osborn Property which is going through a separate process. Councilmember Waters asked about the rezoning option. Ms. Vespier and Commissioner Booher noted that the rezone process will be used, if necessary, to reflect the community vision.

Item 4 on the Docket is the district use chart. Ms. Vespier noted that the Planning Commission has been progressing well and will need a couple more meetings to review.

Next, there was a discussion about alley access/use. The use of alleys for residential and commercial are to be discussed. There was general consent to move forward with the existing transportation consultant to get a cost estimate to review alley uses, needs and impacts.

Some of the Code Inconsistencies items on the Docket had been amended earlier in the year. Ms. Vespier said additional code inconsistencies would be reviewed later this year, if time was available. Councilmember Waters asked about height calculations changes. Ms. Vespier indicated that it was to clarify existing and address items like the alpine coaster.

Ms. Vespier gave an update on the Shoreline Master Program Update. The public review will start at the next Planning Commission meeting.

Discussion occurred on the Planning Commission work and Docket items. Councilmember Hessburg noted that the Planning Commission has been getting a lot of work done and thanked them for taking on this important work. General questions about the Docket and possible amendments continued until 7:00pm.

Housing Action Plan Workshop: Ms. Vespier started the presentation informing the audience about Zoom basics and that copies of the presentation will be available after the meeting. She introduced Dawn Couch from Berk Consulting who is working with the City to create a housing action plan.

Ms. Vespier opened the presentation providing information about Leavenworth housing “where we have been.” After reviewing housing through history, Ms. Vespier reviewed current mix of housing types throughout town. She then turned the meeting over to Dawn Couch to address “where we are today.” Ms. Couch stated that the Draft Housing Needs Assessment still needs additional information from the outreach (public comments) and other data coming in. She went on to review current housing inventory noting that for a town our size we have more diversity in housing types than she would expect. She noted that newer development follows that same trend of diverse housing. She went on to talk about household incomes and housing prices.

Councilmember Wilson said that the new apartment studios were priced very high for people who live in town and it’s very disappointing. Ms. Vespier said that as the market adjusts to having this very large new complex available it will be interesting to see how those rents will change.

Ms. Vespier stated a discussion on “where we are going” noting that she would review Missing Middle housing, Tiny Homes and Affordable Housing. Missing Middle Housing includes duplexes, tri- and four-plex’s, bungalows/cottage housing and live work units. The city currently permits duplexes on 12,000 square foot lots. However, with the addition of accessory dwelling units, in the last few years, a second dwelling is permitted on any lot size and could be like a duplex.

Polling: the poll was not working but Ms. Vespier asked the community what types of Missing Middle housing would they like to see? The community response was positive on all housing types but especially bungalow option was the most popular discussion. Kaylin Bettinger wanted to know how big of a lot bungalow development would require. Ms. Vespier directed the group to MissingMiddleHousing.com for examples. She went on to note that a 60, 80, or 100-foot lot is best. It also depends on access points for the driveway or an alley to determine the lot width. Commissioner Miller noted that she lives near a similar development with Bavarian Village Apartments and Alpine Heights. She noted that style and layout are partly defined by parking requirements.

Commissioner Booher noted that the bungalow setup could be rentals on a single lot instead of permanent housing. He would like to discuss/consider bungalows that could be owned on small lots. Ms. Vespier noted that entry level housing. Commissioner Booher wants to consider how to make bungalows on common wall or individual lot development. Ms. Vespier noted that the comments in the chat field acknowledged the need to address code flexibility, change in lot size, setbacks and parking. She noted that these types of changes can cause concern from the public (especially parking).

Duane Goehner stated the need to partner with neighboring communities to address affordability as the Leavenworth land prices are so high. That may result in a commute to work. He asked if partnering with other communities was part of this plan. Ms. Vespier noted that this plan is focused on the City and some discussions have occurred in the past with neighboring communities. Commissioner Lane noted that partnering is an important consideration while first looking at what the City can do to provide for a diverse community. Knowing that we will still need to keep the concept of partnering with other communities online. Duane noted concern with high land prices and the loss of affordability on small lots as they gain in popularity. Mayor Florea agreed that Duane brought up a good point. He stated that we cannot solve but cannot give up but the key is to ensure that some housing is for long-term affordable housing. His goal is to come up with a funding source to support providing affordable housing.

Ms. Vespier started the discussion on tiny homes noting that the request for tiny homes comes to the City monthly. The request can be individuals for single units and developers who want to do communities. She noted that the building codes are changing to permit some tiny homes so now is the time to consider if tiny homes fit in the community.

Polling question, do you think tiny homes are appropriate for Leavenworth? Ms. Vespier read through several of the comments. Most attending indicated that were in favor of tiny homes. Skip Laeson stated that tiny homes are fine for a couple not a family. Councilmember Wilson said she likes the idea as long as it's put together well and it gives the single person or couple the ability to own something and not rent. Ms. Vespier noted a comment asking why are people concerned with design and layout. Commissioner Miller said she doesn't think the design of individual units but more the group of homes to make sure it is compatible with a single-family neighborhood. Ms. Vespier noted that current codes do have some design requirements like eave overhangs and placement of the front door which may need to be reviewed.

The final types of homes to discuss was affordable housing. Ms. Vespier said there has been confusion between affordable housing and work housing. She reviewed the Revised Code of Washington definition. Chair Lane noted that the RCW does provide for communities to change the levels of income which define affordable housing. He also noted that affordable housing is required to remain affordable for a number of years (30-50). Ms. Vespier discussed affordable housing developments and options.

Polling question, is affordable housing needed in Leavenworth? Most feedback resulted in "yes."

Discussion continued with question and answers about the Housing Needs Assessment which will be reviewed in more detail at the next meeting.

Review of the next meeting topics were discussed.

No new items. Motion to adjourn was provided by Steven Booher.

Adjournment Meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM

(Meeting recording available on request)

Respectfully Submitted,
Devyn Walter, Intern
City of Leavenworth