



501 Delta Ave
Marysville, WA 98270

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

March 26, 2024

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Leifer, Commissioner Kemp, Commissioner Zhu, Commissioner Andes, Commissioner Michal, Vice Chair Whitaker, Commissioner Jordan, Community Development Director Haylie Miller, Principal Planner Angela Gemmer

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 12, 2024

Motion to approve the March 12, 2024 minutes as presented moved by Commissioner Zhu seconded by Commissioner Jordan.

AYES: ALL

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

OLD BUSINESS

Draft Environmental Element for 2024 Comprehensive Plan

Director Miller reviewed this item. Staff is delaying the update to the Critical Areas Ordinance because it is not due until the end of next year, and staff is expecting it to take significant time with new regulations related to buffers and Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs). Extra verbiage was added to the Environmental Element related to CARAs in the City, and some policies were streamlined related to climate change. Maps and figures were also updated. Director Miller noted she will also be adding a description of the Qwuloolt Estuary Restoration Area.

Chair Leifer asked how dedicated the City is to acting on the climate change policies. Director Miller explained that the policies added were ones that staff thought were realistic for Marysville. A lot of the policies overlap with existing regulations. She thinks it is a good starting point. Additional policies related to tracking and greenhouse gas emissions will be required by 2029.

Chair Leifer recommended that the City not go out of its way to spend a lot of money on suspicions that things are going to happen. He questioned the data used to come to conclusions regarding climate change, and recommended they stick only to what the requirements are. Director Miller noted that the City received grant funding to do the Climate Change Vulnerability Study. The City could start going after grant funding to start working on greenhouse gas tracking and the resiliency plan that will be required by 2029. She recommends that they wait a few years. She thinks that addressing things like wildfire smoke, heat waves, increased flooding, sea level rise, etc. seem to be realistic to think about and also meet the current requirements. They are not proposing that any city money be spent on these; they will be looking for grants as needed.

Chair Leifer referred to points made in the Environmental Element about water use and aquifers. He noted that they are filling the valley up in the Marysville trough which is subject to liquefaction in certain circumstances. Developers are filling the properties much deeper than needs to be done which is increasing the load in that area. If the goal is to maintain beneficial uses of the aquifer, there is virtually no one on wells and if they do develop, they are required to go on the city water system. There is no need to worry about the drinking water in that trough because the drinking water comes from higher elevations in other areas. Regarding filtration of the storm water out there, the sand that naturally exists out there is an excellent filter. The idea of requiring a 3-foot minimum separation from the bottom of drainage facilities is not necessary. Additionally, ST3 and some other projects are generating tremendous amounts of material that they need to get rid of. When that work ends, developers in Marysville are going to have a harder time procuring fill. Director Miller noted that the aquifer regulations she had mentioned would only apply to the wellhead protection areas, and the 3-foot separation requirement is a stormwater regulation and not something the City came up with. Chair Leifer discussed how Tumwater addressed concerns with the Stormwater Manual by hiring consultants to come up with an acceptable alternative to what was put out. He noted that Marysville could do the same. Director Miller indicated they could pass the comments on to Public Works for the future.

Commissioner Kemp asked if any of the boundaries for wetlands and aquifers changed on the updated maps. Director Miller explained that the maps were updated to reflect current conditions in Marysville along with the data from state and national databases. Some boundaries shifted but the map just shows potential critical area locations. The expansion of the buffers will be sorted out with the Critical Areas Ordinance discussion. The existing buffers for the city code for streams and wetlands will be increasing with the new regulations.

Vice Chair Whitaker asked about the past success of the Commute Trip Reduction program. Director Miller replied that it has been marginally successful, but the City is required to participate based on its size. As more realistic options come available in Marysville, it may be more utilized.

Commissioner Michal asked if the new housing density laws would take some of these separation requirements into consideration. Director Miller indicated that they would. She also thought this could be worded a little better.

Commissioner Zhu asked what kind of actions the city has done to promote urban forests and the planting of more trees in the City. He wondered about converting some of the wider streets to add more vegetation on the streets. Director Miller said she hasn't heard of any plans to put medians in the streets, but she could check with staff. She explained that parking lots are required to install landscape tree islands. There are also perimeter buffer requirements between parking lots and street frontage landscaping requirements with new developments.

Commissioner Andes asked about plans for Mother Nature's Window. Director Miller thought there were plans to open it up as a park at some point in the future with the intent of leaving most of it in its native state.

Russell Joe, MBKASC, Master Builders of King and Snohomish Counties, referred to Environment Element Goal 7 and asked that it be balanced against EN-9 and EN-10. He noted that permit delays add significant time and expense to projects. He referred to Goal 16 asked the City to consider that cluster developments can be an environmental tool and can help maximize land use, infrastructure, utilities, common areas, and open space. Balancing Goal 16 with EN-23 will be good for future development. He encouraged the Planning Commission to advocate for flexible site design, innovative projects, and goals that respect the environment. He asked that density credits are given when vegetation is retained and open space is provided over and above what the code requires.

Draft Housing Element for 2024 Comprehensive Plan

Principal Planner Gemmer presented the four overall strategies and related actions of the draft Housing Element and requested feedback on each one.

Key Housing Strategies:

- Strategy 1 - Increase housing diversity to expand rental and homeownership opportunities for a wider range of households
- Strategy 2 - Create more housing stability for households at risk of displacement
- Strategy 3 - Support the development of income-restricted affordable and workforce housing
- Strategy 4 - Take a proactive approach to addressing homelessness

Strategy 1:

Action 1.1 Increase residential density along future SWIFT transit lines

Proposed Approach: Since the ultimate SWIFT alignment has not yet been determined, and there should be adequate residential capacity without zoning changes along the

future SWIFT route, zoning changes are not contemplated at this time, but could be pursued if a catalyst event occurs.

Is the proposed approach acceptable for this action?

Feedback:

- Commissioner Michal thought this approach made sense.
- Commissioner Zhu was not comfortable with this plan. He noted that we don't know for sure that SWIFT will be here or what route they will pick. What happens if they decide to change the route?

Action 1.2 - Create more flexibility for townhome development

Proposed Approach: Amend the code to allow unit lot subdivisions as required by State law and associate standards, where required.

Should the City focus on compliance with State law only or pursue further amendments to increase flexibility?

Feedback:

- Commissioners asked questions about HOAs being associated with townhomes, townhomes in residential areas, and the minimum number of townhomes required on a project.
- Commissioners Whitaker and Michal, Zhu, and Kemp seemed to support just being consistent with state law for now.

Action 1.3 - Expand and recalibrate existing Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) Program

Proposed Approach: Over the planning period, consideration should be given to potentially: expanding the MFTE area, reducing the unit threshold from 10 to 4, reaching out to developers to increase program awareness, and conducting a market assessment.

Should all or some of these actions be considered over the next 20 years?

Feedback:

- Commissioner Zhu said it makes sense to do a market assessment first.
- Vice Chair Whitaker asked about the reason for reducing the threshold from 10 to 4. Ms. Gemmer explained the consultant thought it could make it more achievable. Vice Chair Whitaker thought that these seemed like responsible proposals to try to meet the need over the next twenty years.
- Commissioner Michal agreed with Commissioner Whitaker and also with Commissioner Zhu. At some point it makes sense to look at reducing the threshold.
- Commissioner Jordan asked if they have reached out to developers to get their opinions. Ms. Gemmer replied that they have not, but doing more outreach is part of the plan.
- Chair Leifer wondered if maybe this should be expanded to other areas such as along the SWIFT bus route.

Action 1.4 - Consider Middle Housing best practices when complying with HB 1110

Proposed Action: The City will carefully evaluate the best approach to implementing the middle housing provisions of HB 1110 in 2025

Is the proposed approach acceptable for this action?

Feedback:

- Commissioners seemed to think this approach was acceptable.

Action 1.5 - Balance housing development among school districts

Proposed approach: Consider promoting multi-family zoning in the Lake Stevens School District portion of Marysville, and incentivizing housing development in the Marysville School District.

Should the City explore promoting more multi-family in the Marysville portion of the Lake Stevens School District? Should incentives be considered to encourage residential development in the Marysville School District part of the city?

Feedback:

- Commissioner Michal commented on the topic of housing churn, the aging population, and challenges with empty nesters who might want to downsize but don't have the opportunity which would make a family-sized home unavailable in that part of the city. She spoke in support of exploring options related to this.
- Vice Chair Whitaker spoke in support of exploring options to help enthruse the Marysville School District.
- Commissioner Kemp agreed that anything they could do for Marysville schools would be good for everyone. He wondered who draws the school district lines. Rod Reed responded to this and explained it is by census tracts.
- Commissioner Zhu spoke in support of the approach but recommended prioritizing housing needs in the Marysville School District first.

Action 1.6 - Pursue Accessory Dwelling Unit Code Amendments and Incentives

Proposed approach: Adopt the required State ADU requirements, and potentially consider incentives such as providing pre-approved house plans.

Should the City only adopt required ADU amendments, or should the City consider incentives such as establishing pre-approved ADU plans?

Feedback:

- Commissioner Kemp said he was very supportive of this.
- Commissioner Andes asked about setbacks for ADUs. Ms. Gemmer explained they would need to vet that through the Planning Commission. Commissioner Andes wondered how ADUs would even fit on most lots. He doesn't see how these would be practical or buildable in many lots in Marysville, especially newer ones.

Active 1.7 - Create more flexibility for Planned Residential Development (PRDs)

Proposed approach: The PRD code will be audited to ensure that it complies with state law and that standards such as access, open space, housing types, and density allowances are furthering City housing goals.

Is the proposed approach acceptable?

Feedback:

- Commissioners indicated the approach was acceptable.

Strategy 2.1 - Conduct targeted research to better understand displacement risk

Proposed approach: Monitoring of areas at risk of displacement if development should occur. Before pursuing zoning changes in susceptible areas, a risk assessment should be conducted. Community engagement should also occur. After conducting a risk assessment and community engagement, an anti-displacement strategy for impacted areas should be pursued at the direction of City Council.

Should the City pursue targeted outreach to better understand displacement risk? Is the proposed approach acceptable?

Feedback:

- Commissioner Zhu wondered what the best way is to address the issue of displacement. Ms. Gemmer concurred that it is a complex issue.
- Commissioners wondered what an anti-displacement strategy would look like and how the City would be involved. Ms. Gemmer thought it would probably be through incentives.
- Chair Leifer wondered why people couldn't take advantage of the increased cost of property and move somewhere else. Ms. Gemmer replied that it would be worse for renters than for owners. For homeowners, the issue might be a big increase in property tax because of so much development in the area. This can be significant for people on fixed incomes or people with a small amount of equity. She summarized that there appeared to be mixed feelings about this, and it might be best to proceed cautiously. She noted that there might be ways the City can partner with people to help them with technical assistance or paperwork.

Strategy 2.2 - Support the preservation of mobile home parks

Proposed approach: Over the planning period, research is proposed on other mechanisms that can help preserve mobile home parks such as an ordinance allowing tenants opportunities to pursue ownership of their mobile home park.

Is the proposed approach to research other methods to preserve mobile home parks acceptable?

Feedback:

- Commissioner Andes recalled discussions the Planning Commission had several years ago. How is this different? Ms. Gemmer explained that the zoning piece is already in place. This would allow the mobile home park tenants time to organize and potentially make an offer to become owners. This strategy is just asking if

the City should explore additional mechanisms. There was some discussion about where new mobile home parks would be allowed.

- Chair Leifer commented while he wasn't necessarily recommending it, if they wanted to increase affordable housing opportunities they could tighten up the density in mobile home parks. Ms. Gemmer noted this could be added to the list of things to potentially consider. Chair Leifer spoke in support of what was presented by staff.
- Commissioner Michal also thought this seemed reasonable and seemed like an example of an anti-displacement strategy.

Strategy 3.1 - Develop a Land Bank Strategy and partnerships to support low-income and workforce housing

Proposed approach: The city may elect to consider participation in a land banking strategy.

Should the City research land banking further?

Feedback:

- There was general support for this.

Strategy 3.2 - Coordinate with regional Affordable Housing Partners

Proposed approach: Currently this section is drafted as things that the City could do to better coordinate with Affordable Housing Partners but does not commit the City to any action.

Is the proposed approach okay? Should the City consider deeper coordination with regional Affordable Housing Partners?

Feedback:

- There was general support for this.

Strategy 4.1 - Partner with non-profits on providing permanent supportive housing (PSH)

Proposed approach: The Housing Element (HE) indicates that various steps could be pursued to develop a plan to developer PSH including: outreach to housing and service providers; ensuring that fees and zoning promote efficient and cost-effective projects; and allowing PSH to benefit from land banking, if pursued. The HE does not commit to an approach - it currently provides these actions as suggestions.

Is the proposed approach acceptable? Should the City partner with local non-profits and service providers to develop a plan to deliver permanent supportive housing units within the community?

Feedback:

- There was general support for this.

Strategy 4.2 - Consider emergency shelter needs

Proposed approach: The City may wish to pursue emergency shelters for those experiencing homelessness in Marysville. An initial step would be to better understand

shelter needs within the City so that appropriate services are provided. Coordinating with Snohomish County and other service providers on the demographics of those experiencing homelessness would be important to this effort.

Is the proposed approach acceptable? Should more outreach occur to better understand the City's emergency shelter needs?

Feedback:

- There were questions about how this would look and who would run it, Ms. Gemmer said it would be up to the Council but it might be a partnership with a non-profit would run it.
- Chair Leifer asked how they would provide something like this without creating a regional center of attraction that draws from other cities. Ms. Gemmer replied that this is something that would need to be explored. Partnering with social services could help to ensure high standards. She thought looking at tenure, if it is lawful, could be helpful.

Feedback on Policies Responsive to PSRC Requirements:

- Chair Leifer noted that the policies are required by PSRC, so they need to be included. Ms. Gemmer concurred but noted they could shape the language if desired.
- Vice Chair Whitaker noted they all touch on elements that they have already discussed.
- A question was raised about PSRC's authority. Commissioner Michal reviewed this.

Rod Reed, 4924 72nd Place NE, Marysville, referred to MFTE and commented that other jurisdictions that have used it have used it with vertical density. He noted that it might not fit Marysville yet. He was pleased to hear the discussion tonight. He commented on the stability of historical neighborhoods and urged support for them. He expressed concern about losing some of the neighborhood "fit" that used to be part of the Comprehensive Plan. He spoke to the importance of maintaining neighborhoods, well-built homes, and livability as they add the ADUs. He referred to affordability and discussed transitional housing and home ownership work that he used to do with Housing Hope. He referred to emergency shelters and noted that this has actually become a problem in his neighborhood with a shelter on church property. He acknowledged that those people need housing but expressed concern about the location. It's bringing people into the neighborhood that probably wouldn't be there otherwise. He suggested that they need to seriously think about the siting of any shelter and site it appropriately. He referred to Strategy 4 and recommended that the City require a religious organization to ensure that local law enforcement has completed sex offender checks for all guests. There are also MOU provisions allowing for public health and safety of city residents that should be given greater consideration. He stressed that it should be done consistently with the zoning, and right now it is not.

Chair Leifer thanked Mr. Reed and said he agreed with a lot of what Mr. Reed said.

Russel Joe, MBKASC, referred to Section 5.4, Strategy 1. He recommended continuing to study the SWIFT transit line and be ready to pounce on zoning changes should the need arise. He also recommended watching to see if Strategy 1.2 related to townhomes continues to conform to state law. Regarding middle housing and ADUs, he recommended watching Lake Stevens and Everett as they have taken the lead on these topics. Regarding MFTE, he encouraged the Planning Commission to make it as flexible as possible and possibly expand to other areas of the city where it makes sense. Going from 10 units to 4 is a big step in the right direction. 12 years of MFTE waiver if there is affordability is great. He also recommended that the Planning Commission consider an 8-year waiver of MFTE for market rate housing.

Quarterly Development Update Presentation

NEW BUSINESS

Director Miller made a presentation on recent projects in the community. Some of the projects included Smile Dental, El Rey, Burrito California, and Marysville Corporate Center. The White Barn Development includes Coconut Kenney's, Chick-fil-A, gas station, Brown Bear, Everett Clinic, White Barn Dental, a nail salon, and Kids-n-Us. Other projects include Kendall Subaru dealership, Tesla, Soli Organic, and North Sound Industrial Park. Director Miller presented a diagram of the Cascade Industrial Center (CIC) showing existing buildings and proposed development. There is a lot of interest in the CIC with about 25% of the space still available.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS and MINUTES

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 9:25 p.m. moved by Commissioner Michal seconded by Commissioner Jordan.

AYES: ALL

NEXT MEETING – April 9, 2024