

I. Call to Order

A regular session of the Gresham Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Drechsler on the 26th of October 2020, at 6:32 PM online via Zoom. The meeting was digitally recorded and minutes prepared by Jennifer McGinnis.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Paul Drechsler, Chair
Richard Anderson, Vice-Chair
Mike Bennett
Jef Kaiser
Sue Ruonala

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Laura Pramuk
Phil Wich

STAFF PRESENT: Katherine Kelly, Planning & Implementation Manager
David Berniker, Urban Design & Planning Director
Amanda Lunsford, Administrative Analyst
Kevin McConnell, Senior City Attorney
Ricardo Banuelos, Associate Planner
Tina Osterink, Natural Resources Planner
Carly Rice, Assistant Transportation Planner

COUNCIL LIAISONS PRESENT: Councilor Hinton

COUNCIL LIAISONS ABSENT: Councilor Widmark

OTHER PARTIES PRESENT: Jim Buck, Urban Forestry Subcommittee Chair
Tracy Slack, Transportation Subcommittee Member

II. Urban Forestry Subcommittee (UFS) Update

Jim Buck, Chair of the Urban Forestry Subcommittee (UFS) provided an update on what the UFS has been working on the past year.

This included:

- Creating an interactive online version of the tree brochure

- Partnering with CAL students
- Arbor month plantings and tree care at Gradin and Nadaka parks and the Rockwood neighborhood
- Getting Gresham designated as a Bee City
- Promoting canopy stories
- Reviewing street trees along major arterials
- Providing input on the tree code reorganization
- Providing input on the Environmental Overlay Project
- Hosting a Tree and Health symposium with panels and presentations
- Developing canopy metrics
- Submitting the Tree City USA application for the 11th year
- Adding a new member

In addition, UFS received a \$25,000 grant from East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District. This grant is being used for the Branch Out Gresham project, a spatial analysis tool created in partnership with Vivek Shandas at Portland State University.

Mr. Buck outlined the top three actions UFS would like to take, which include establishing a citywide tree canopy target, providing technical arborist expertise, and working with city departments to integrate urban forestry into plans and practices. The committee's goals include creating a high quality urban forest, establishing proactive public tree maintenance and management, and promoting community partnership and education opportunities.

He said that the committee's challenges include finding ways to incentivize developers to preserve clumps of trees, frustration that street trees are not prioritized along arterial roads, and code enforcement issues with tree topping and pruning on commercial properties. He expressed a desire to work with the Planning Commission to determine how to move these goals forward with new City leadership. Commissioner Bennett said that it is important for the Planning Commission to see the metrics UFS is developing. Mr. Buck responded that he will provide these at the work session scheduled for 11/9/2020.

Commissioner Kaiser asked what it costs the city to be part of the Tree City program. Tina Osterink responded that there is no recertification fee, just a requirement to dedicate a minimum of \$2 per capita on urban forestry efforts and staff time to compile data and document outreach. On average, Gresham designates about \$5 per capita.

Commissioner Kaiser said a past frustration is that the City doesn't have a good handle on its tree inventory which makes it difficult to set goals. He asked if the tree metrics include canopy inventories. Mr. Buck responded that they do, in addition to potential planting areas. He said this is becoming more challenging due to wildfire concerns, gardening, not wanting shade, smaller lots, and competition for space with stormwater facilities. Ms. Osterink added that the City's GIS department has a 2014 dataset. Commissioner Kaiser said that since that data is 7

years old, they need to pay attention to anecdotal data also. Commissioner Anderson said that as they implement HB2001, they need to look at tree canopy, stormwater, and density together. Mr. Buck said that the Hillsboro Tree Preservation Policy and Louisville, Kentucky tree regulations are both good examples of tree policy.

Commissioner Ruonala said the examples Mr. Buck brought up are good examples of Gresham failing to preserve trees and green space and that she appreciates the committee's work. Mr. Buck responded that he appreciates the link between Commissioners Ruonala and Kaiser and the UFS.

Councilor Hinton asked if staff could explain the disconnect. David Berniker responded that UDP is doing its best to come up with responsive code, but they are not always able to conduct inspections due to a lack of staff. The building department tries to help but their responsibility is to look at the building rather than planning items such as trees and stormwater facilities. Code Compliance only gets involved when asked. Mr. Buck added that in 2008, there was an inspector who would ensure tree protections were adhered to early in the process, but that position was cut and never reinstated. Ms. Osterink added that staff are aware of the disconnect and are trying to integrate feedback loops and utilize the expertise of a consulting arborist. Chair Drechsler said that since there is a budget and staffing crunch, he wants to target large developments by implementing a fee to ensure landscaping is done correctly. The Planning Commission is looking at bringing a change to the fee structure before Council. Councilor Hinton said that in many jurisdictions, a bond is filed with the developer. Chair Drechsler said they need to have a conversation with code enforcement because there are not a lot of teeth to the code and people are aware of this. Commissioner Ruonala said that she hasn't seen anything change in the past 15 years as far as enforcement for tree removal. She said that developers get away with things while homeowners can't get through the bureaucracy.

III. Transportation Subcommittee Update

Tracy Slack provided an update on the Transportation Subcommittee's activities over the past year. These activities included:

- Reviewing the sections of the draft Capital Improvements Plan related to transportation and footpaths
- Continuing work on the Hitting the Streets project
- ADA improvements
- Receiving a Rapid Response grant from ODOT Safe Routes to School to be used for improvements at 5th and Hogan. These improvements were determined from a Safety Audit after the death of a Dexter-McCarty student and will include flashing school zone signs, an extended school zone, and installation of an asphalt path on the east side of Hogan. These improvements will be installed early next spring.
- Working with art students to create traffic lawn signs about safety.
- Conducting a micromobility survey that received around 375 responses. Racial demographics of the city were very closely represented and there was a nearly even split

of responses between not wanting, wanting, and having concerns about adding micromobility options in Gresham.

He said that due to COVID, there has been a decline in all forms of transit, especially public transportation and curb use has changed to mostly short term stops rather than long term parking.

Commissioner Kaiser asked what the Transportation Subcommittee's scope of responsibilities is and what their level of involvement is with the Bus Rapid Transit project on Division, the CIP, and Metro Corridor work. Tracy responded that they tried to give structure to the micromobility survey and provided input on the CIP to Chris Strong to bring to Council. He said that he has stayed aware of the Division project but has not contributed. Ms. Kelly added that the committee was involved in the Division Bus Rapid Transit Project for 3 years prior to Tracy's involvement with the Transportation Subcommittee. She said that the committee is involved with the CIP by discussing the proposed projects and budget.

Commissioner Ruonala said there are no minutes posted online for the Transportation Subcommittee and she is concerned that there is no way for the public to see what the committee has been talking about. Ms. Kelly said that there was not a quorum at the May meeting so the February minutes haven't been adopted. The agenda for the May meeting should be online.

Commissioner Ruonala asked if the positions have been filled for members whose terms were expiring. She said at the last meeting she attended, they talked about needing representation from people with mobility issues. Ms. Kelly responded that they have 7 or 8 applicants, but interviews have not been conducted yet. She said one of the reasons for not proceeding is that they wanted to do more targeted outreach to diverse communities and people with disabilities. Councilor Hinton added that this is one of the last committees they need to fill and they want to get as diverse a pool of applicants as possible.

Commissioner Kaiser asked if there is anything the committee needs from the Planning Commission. Tracy responded that the committee does not have any obstacles that need to be solved by the Planning Commission, but they need to resume longer term planning activities and the 2021 Council Work Plan may jumpstart a resurgence in activity.

Commissioner Anderson said he thought the transportation plan was going to be updated, but this was delayed due to budget reasons. Ms. Kelly responded that work on the Transportation System Plan (TSP) will officially start once Metro starts their regional transportation plan update. For the next 12-18 months prior to this update, she would like to work on policy neutral changes such as integrating the Pleasant Valley and Springwater TSPs. After this, they can examine policy issues when the new Mayor and Council are more established, Metro has new mobility standards for the region, and they are better informed on micromobility trends. This proposal will be brought to Council in January. Mr. Berniker clarified that the administrative work would be started in January or February 2021 and the TSP update would be started in 2022.

Commissioner Bennett asked if there is still a Council member assigned to follow the Metro transportation plan. Councilor Hinton responded that the Mayor is on the East Multnomah County Transportation Committee (EMCTC) and the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPAC). He said he has been attending EMCTC recently, but this will change soon due to the changes in leadership. He said that the information from these groups should be brought back to the Transportation Subcommittee.

IV. Other Business/Adjournment

Chair Drechsler read a draft letter to Council written by Commission Pramuk:

During the last few years the City of Gresham has accelerated the pace and size of housing development in accordance with policies to expand the availability and affordability of housing in the greater metro area. As a result the city has added several high quality and cutting edge developments across the city that are providing housing to low income and middle income residents. With this development has come the need to upgrade transportation, parks, sewer and water infrastructure, and public transportation. The complexity of this work over the last few years has been impressive, and the Planning Department has done an equally impressive job of keeping up with the need to process and oversee this development which will define the Gresham of the future.

While this development is needed and supported by the Planning Commission, we feel that the responsibility of oversight, analysis, and community outreach should be commensurate with the pace of development. We cannot sacrifice quality, environmental values and the overall livability of our city in order to build housing as fast as we can. The Planning Commission recommends that the Council consider adding at least one, if not two more positions within the Planning Department in an Oversight and Inspection role that would be responsible for making sure that Planning Commission and Department terms and conditions are met by developers throughout the building process. These terms and conditions are different and in addition to the many regulations that Code and Building Inspectors oversee. The Code and Building Inspectors have enough on their plate and do not have the proper insight to interpret or know the intent of many Planning Commission and Department terms and conditions. Our goals are different from code enforcement and often concern tree preservation, aesthetics, and design elements.

If the community is to continue to support the pace of development it must trust that new developments reflect the desires of the community as communicated through the Planning Commission. In order to honor that trust and to do the things that we have promised, the Planning Commission needs extra eyes on developers that are solely devoted to ensuring that Commission and Department objectives are being met. We urge the Gresham City Council to increase the budget of the planning department and enable it to continue its high level of output along with the oversight that the pace of development requires.

Chair Drechsler said that he would like to provide a presentation about the importance of planning and development to City Council and would like to hear from everybody.

Commissioner Ruonala said that she agrees with the premise. Commissioner Anderson also agreed and said that code enforcement has been a frustration the entire time he has been on the Planning Commission. Commissioner Kaiser said that the letter is a good first draft and that his comment is to explore other ideas in addition to adding staff, such as exacting a fee on developers to pay for inspections. Commissioner Bennett said that the draft covers a broad range of subject matter and he suggests they pick one idea and create a thorough plan for implementation. Kevin McConnell said that the Commission will need to make a decision on how they want to approach the issue in a public work session.

Chair Drechsler said that he is concerned about the long-term ramifications on development in the city because Gresham is still seeing a lot of development and the work staff does is critical. He said they need to look at SDCs, incremental tax, and other options to fund planning. Commissioner Bennett said that they need to be careful with how they manage SDCs because they can help attract business and residents. Chair Drechsler said that a lot of people are moving from cities to suburbs and he doesn't know how they are going to get ahead of changes due to COVID without adequate planning. Commissioner Anderson added that Gresham has the lowest amount of SDCs in the area. He said that most developers are willing to pay SDCs because they bring certainty and are recognized as the cost of doing business. Mr. Berniker said that he is proud of what UDP does with limited resources, but he is concerned about providing the same level of service with budget cuts. Councilor Hinton said that there is broad support for the Planning Commission and planning staff. Commissioner Bennett said that the Planning Commission can act as a coordinating committee and outline a path to Council.

Councilor Hinton said that he would like to see the City actively try to develop the tax base with single-family homes and executive housing. Commissioner Ruonala said that they do not have enough office space, industrial areas, shopping centers, restaurants, or destinations, which are needed to create a vibrant community. Mr. Berniker said that Gresham is ripe for corporate retail. He added that a wide range of housing types is what makes a complete, robust, connected community and the transportation system is a huge asset in Gresham. He said that they need to figure out how to connect the civic station area with downtown. In addition, he said they need to think about how to engage the subcommittees. Commissioner Bennett said he recommends that Staff put together a work session with a draft document that can be voted on.

Chair Drechsler asked if City Council would be receptive to these ideas. Councilor Hinton responded that they would be, but the Commission may want to wait until the swearing in of new Council members in January. Commissioner Bennett asked when Council develops the work plan because the Planning Commission's work is supposed to be coordinated with that. Councilor Hinton responded that the Council Work Plan is typically finalized in late spring.

Review of 8/24 minutes

Commissioner Anderson moved to approve the 8/24 minutes, which was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Chairperson

Recording Assistant

Date

Date