

**REDMOND PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

May 30, 2012

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairman Franz Wiechers-Gregory, Vice Chair Vibhas Chandorkar, Commissioners Biethan, Chandorkar, and Miller

COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED: Commissioner Murray

STAFF PRESENT: Sarah Stiteler, Redmond Planning Department; Pete Sullivan, Redmond Planning Department

RECORDING SECRETARY: Lady of Letters, Inc.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Gregory in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

There were no changes to the agenda.

ITEMS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

There were no items from the audience.

PUBLIC HEARING AND STUDY SESSION, Proposed Zoning Code Amendment to eliminate requirement for applicants for additions/modifications to existing single-family homes to relocate utility distribution lines underground along public rights-of-way and clarify code provisions to request exemptions, presented by Pete Sullivan, City of Redmond Planner.

Chair Gregory opened the public hearing and called Ms. Jennie Proby to speak on behalf of the Sammamish Rowing Association (SRA), of which she is the Executive Director. She was accompanied by several members of the SRA's Board of Directors. She noted that her group is a community-based, non-profit rowing association operating out of a shed that is more than thirty years old in Marymoor Park. The SRA serves more than eight hundred rowers each year, offering scholarship assistance to those in need. The group is in the process of building a new boathouse. When the building permit for this structure was issued in May 2009, Verizon was the relevant telecommunications utility. Conduit was laid along the property frontage on West Lake Sammamish Parkway pursuant to the requirements of the permit and instructions from Verizon.

In November 2009, six months after the permit was issued, Redmond approved the sale of Verizon to Frontier. In the summer of 2011, the SRA paid for a new turn lane to be installed in front of the parking lot on West Lake Sammamish Parkway, which was also authorized by the building permit. At that time, the SRA approached Frontier about undergrounding the telecommunications line. Frontier rejected Verizon's conduit design, which the SRA had already installed at a cost of about \$20,000. The SRA's building permit requires the undergrounding of overhead utilities along the 175-foot property frontage, and the conduit has been laid to do that

work. However, complying with Frontier would require the extension of the undergrounding hundreds of feet past the SRA's property line. Frontier says its version of the underground conversion will cost the SRA an additional \$144,000. Frontier's rejection of the work the SRA has done will increase the SRA's costs by more than 700%. Ms. Proby said her group does not have that kind of money, let alone the \$1.5 million needed to finish the boathouse.

Ms. Proby noted that the City of Redmond has plans to widen and improve West Lake Sammamish Parkway in the future, and any undergrounding done now will have to be redone. She said the requirements from Frontier will be a complete waste of time and money. Ms. Proby said she understands that the Commission is considering a zoning code change to provide relief from the undergrounding requirements to single-family homeowners, and the SRA is respectfully asking that the same relief be applied to its non-profit community organization. Ms. Proby said undergrounding should be paid for by all the citizens and businesses of Redmond equitably, and should not be done in piecemeal fashion. She thanked the Commission members for their time.

Commissioner Biethan asked if the SRA has approached the Planning Department or the Code Enforcement staff in Redmond. Ms. Proby said the SRA had done that, and one of her Board members responded to this question. Lisa Place spoke to the Commission and noted that the SRA was indeed working with Dave Almond in Redmond's Planning Department to negotiate the timing of the undergrounding. She said Frontier's estimate for this work could be more or less, but she noted that the SRA is trying to work out how to meet the conditions of the building permit but hopefully not pay a huge fee. Commissioner Biethan asked about the total project cost for the boathouse. Ms. Place said the project would cost \$3 million, but the SRA has already spent \$1.4 million mostly on the studies that needed to be done due to the wetland location of the SRA's building. Utilities have been laid to the site and the building is going up now. In September, the structure should be watertight but not finished inside.

Chair Gregory asked about any written comments. Mr. Sullivan said no written comments have been received. Chair Gregory asked if there were any reason to keep the public comment period open, both written and oral. Mr. Sullivan noted that there were no pending comments. Without objection, Chair Gregory closed the oral and written portion of the public hearing on this Zoning Code amendment.

Going to the study session, Mr. Sullivan reviewed the issue table that captured the discussion issues that the Commission raised at the last meeting. He noted this issue first surfaced in 2011 as part of the Utilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Sullivan asked if the Planning Commission would confirm the discussion issues presented in the issue matrix. He noted that the Commission's comment last week about reviewing the City's overall approach to undergrounding is noted in the issue table, and that staff suggested the Planning Commission recommend to Council that the issue be visited at a future date.

Mr. Sullivan pointed out that the provision in question in this meeting is limited to providing relief for single-family development, including minor residential additions or new single-family homes on existing lots, or modifications to single-family homes. The City has noted that project costs for minor developments for undergrounding can become a large portion of the overall project cost. In 2011, the Commission recommended developing exemptions for single-family residential development from these requirements. Other land-use types were not considered at

that time. Staff had recommended at the time to use the existing mechanism for relief by petitioning the Technical Committee as to why the level of impact does not match the mitigation. Part of the 2012 proposal is to follow up on that recommendation and limit the scope to single-family homes. The Commission has asked if this is the best way to do undergrounding, as development occurs. Staff is recommending that the Commission's report does reflect the comments of last week and, if the proposal is acceptable for the Commission with regard to single-family homes, then that should be reflected in the issue matrix and report.

If there are other comments or concerns from the Commission about looking at this further, that would be noted in the report as further follow-up that City Council might have as perhaps a phase two looking at further Comprehensive Plan policy or Zoning Code amendments. Staff looked at the Code and found it satisfactory that, if costs are known to be out of balance with the overall project costs, there is a way to make that petition to the Technical Committee. That text has been relocated to a new, more prominent heading. It applies to all frontage requirements, including stormwater or sidewalk improvements. In a situation where the configuration of the lot or utilities causes an issue, relief can be sought. Mr. Sullivan asked if the Commission needed to go through the issue matrix.

Chair Gregory said the public testimony reinforced Issue 1, raised by Vice Chair Chandorkar, to the point that the Commission needs to look at the whole issue of undergrounding. The idea would be to do undergrounding on a more consistent basis notwithstanding the individual hardships heard by the Commission on these requirements. Vice Chair Chandorkar added that staff has done a good job of summarizing his concerns, and asked when this issue would come up for further discussion. Mr. Sullivan said that timeframe would be determined following City Council direction on the matter. Vice Chair Chandorkar noted that the SRA should voice its concerns to the City Council as well. Mr. Sullivan noted that the public hearing at this meeting is the only public hearing that will occur for this issue. Vice Chair Chandorkar confirmed with Mr. Sullivan that any comments from a group like the SRA would be included in the Commission's report to City Council. The final action from the Council, after a study session but without a public hearing, is scheduled for the end of July.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the Hearing Examiner has already made a decision at the project level for the SRA. The difficult aspect for the SRA is that the decision has been made and the appeals period has passed. So, establishing a precedent of going back on a decision already made would be tricky, and Mr. Sullivan said the City will proceed thoughtfully with this discussion and involve the City Attorney if necessary. Mr. Sullivan was encouraged that the SRA is in contact with Planning Staff, which is working with all necessary parties including the City Attorney to look at options. That conversation is ongoing and still productive.

Commissioner Biethan asked if the decision was made when the previous underground utility provider was in place. Mr. Sullivan said he did not know. Commissioner Biethan said he did not want to intrude on the space of the Planning Department or the Technical Committee, but he said he was concerned. He was not sure what the Commission's purview was in this situation, but noted that 5% of the overall development costs for the SRA were involved in undergrounding, which he said was an awful lot. Chair Gregory said the Commission members could express their concern, but the purview of the Commission remained legislative in nature, outside the purview of the SRA project. Mr. Gregory said tonight's discussion deals with policy surrounding a

Zoning Code amendment, not a quasi-judicial legal matter. Commissioner Biethan wanted to make sure his concern was noted, which other Commission members shared.

Chair Gregory asked, in the case where this amendment was passed and adopted by the City Council, if that would impact future cases and their ability to appeal to the Technical Committee. Mr. Sullivan said this amendment would not change the mechanism by which an applicant could petition the Technical Committee or other decision maker for relief. The amendment does move this issue to a new, more prominent part of the Zoning Code. Chair Gregory said any concerns from the SRA would have to be taken up with the Hearing Examiner rather than through a policy change. Mr. Sullivan reiterated that this amendment would not impact the SRA's ability to work at the development review level to see if a new level of reasonableness could be achieved with its project. Commissioner Miller noted that this amendment does not help the SRA, either. Mr. Sullivan reiterated that this was not within the purview of the Planning Commission.

Chair Gregory closed the issue matrix. Mr. Sullivan noted that staff would generate a report that will appear in the Planning Commission's packet in about a week. He encouraged the Commissioners to look out for that report to ensure it covers issues that the City Council should consider apart from the specific amendment proposal. The report will incorporate written comments received by the Commission, and the final issue matrix will be prepared with items shown as closed and the public comment inserted into the first matrix item, which is about the overall approach to undergrounding. On June 13th, Mr. Sullivan will come back for a final recommendation from the Commission. Chair Gregory asked to leave this issue in order to move onto the briefing concerning the 2012 Community Indicators Report.

Vice Chair Chandorkar asked if the comments of the Planning Commission would be an addendum to the report on the Zoning Code amendment, or if they would be part of the general text of the report. Mr. Sullivan said the comments would appear in the issue matrix, which is attached to the report. The body of the report will have a section regarding issues considered and discussed where these comments will surface as well. Chair Gregory asked to reopen the discussion on the amendment and called for a motion.

MOTION by Commissioner Biethan, and seconded by Commissioner O'Hara, to recommend the approval of the amendment to the Zoning Code regarding undergrounding. Motion approved unanimously (5-0).

BRIEFING, 2012 Community Indicators Report, staff overview of 2012 report and feedback from the Planning Commission, presented by Jeff Churchill, City of Redmond Planner.

Mr. Churchill said this was the seventh annual Community Indicators report, and the first since the Comprehensive Plan was updated at the end of 2011. He noted that Redmond Community Indicators has three purposes:

1. It helps the City know if it is making progress in achieving Comprehensive Plan goals.
2. It helps advisory bodies like the Planning Commission by providing information that is relevant to discussions over policy changes.
3. It is a compilation of information about Redmond for people who live, work, or want to live or work in Redmond.

The Planning Commission last dealt with Community Indicators in October of 2011. The Commission recommended, and the Council approved, some better alignment among the data used in Community Indicators and what is used for budgeting priorities. That reduces data requests to staff and ensures that the same data is used for different governing bodies. Mr. Churchill pointed out that Redmond has fared better in some ways, economically, compared to the nation as a whole. He added that he would also focus on the community and its conservation of natural resources, which is a strong point for Redmond.

Regarding the economy, Mr. Churchill noted that economic data is patchy at the city level for a city the size of Redmond. There is no income or poverty data that is newer than 2009, and there is no wage data newer than 2008. Tax receipts and business license information is current through 2011. The data, altogether, have normalized units compared to levels found in 2006. Mr. Churchill noted that the recession was felt strongly in decreased sales tax receipts. Those receipts went down prior to the recession and only started to recover in 2011, but not all that much. However, property tax receipts have increased every year since 2006. Mr. Churchill noted that there has been a lot of building in Redmond over the last six years, which is largely the reason why those receipts have increased. The number of businesses has been increasing as well, but it was hard to say the reason why. Without more recent data, this is an incomplete picture.

More data is available around the amount of waste produced by single-family households and the amount of water consumption in Redmond. The weather, the price of water, and City programs impact these issues. Over time, Mr. Churchill noted a trend that the community is engaged in reducing waste and conserving drinking water. Both of those figures are down more than 15% since 2006, and have decreased almost the exact same amount.

In closing, Mr. Churchill said that Redmond will change in the next twenty years, and the Planning Commission and the Council have worked hard to refine the vision in the Comprehensive Plan that describes what that future could look like. He asked the Commission if Community Indicators is providing the information the Commission members need to make informed decisions. Mr. Churchill noted that Community Indicators could be flexible, and he wanted it to be keyed to the Comprehensive Plan. However, he was open to changes and improvements and asked the Commission for any questions or comments.

Vice Chair Chandorkar asked about the response time for emergency medical service, which has gone up in the past few years. He asked if this was due to Redmond's larger geographical area, and asked how much of a role the City played in that response time. Mr. Churchill said because the City runs a fire department, the City has significant influence over response time because the City staffs the stations and locates equipment in different areas. However, this is a cooperative effort with neighboring jurisdictions. He said he would investigate that issue further. Commissioner Miller asked about the new fire station and how it would impact the report. Mr. Churchill said that would not impact the report, as that station just opened in 2012.

Vice Chair Chandorkar said it was interesting how the median size of single-family homes increased to 3,125 square feet from 3,010. He asked why that was the case. Mr. Churchill said this number has jumped around a little bit. There was not a big sample size for the last few years because there has not been a lot of home building. That number has actually increased by a few

hundred square feet or more each year prior to the recession. Mr. Churchill said the long-term trend spoke to bigger homes, but it was hard to make much of the year-to-year changes.

Vice Chair Chandorkar asked about the percentage of affordable housing and the cost-burdened families, who pay 30% of their incomes to housing. He confirmed that 31% of the households in Redmond are cost-burdened. Vice Chair Chandorkar asked if that spoke to the cost of housing or the lack of affordable housing. Mr. Churchill said it was probably both. Vice Chair Chandorkar said that was a startling figure and asked for regional data to compare this to. Ms. Stiteler noted that Redmond's figures were consistent with the region. Some parts of King County are higher, but overall, it is consistent county-wide that 30% of households are cost-burdened. Ms. Stiteler said the cumulative figure of the 30% and the 11%, regarding the severely cost-burdened, was really startling.

Vice Chair Chandorkar asked if the statistic of paying 30% of one's income towards a mortgage was not a normal figure, and asked if this *severely cost-burdened* indicator was proper. Ms. Stiteler said that 30-33% would be considered a norm, but said also that in the percentage of households, renter households are more likely to be cost-burdened than homeowners, which can seem counter-intuitive. Chair Gregory noted that a lot of senior households fall into the burdened designation, and situations can change over time, as in the foreclosure crisis. Mr. Churchill noted that the data reflects people who took out mortgages when housing costs were higher, and those people may not have been able to refinance. Vice Chair Chandorkar said regardless, this was a startling figure.

Vice Chair Chandorkar asked next about the ratio of residents to employees in Redmond. The observed 2010 ratio is 0.7, which he believed was used to indicate how many people who live in Redmond work in Redmond. Mr. Churchill disagreed, and said this number does not match where people live and where they work. Instead, the number relates the amount of people who live in the City to the amount of people who work in Redmond. Therefore, this does not indicate commute patterns, necessarily. The concept behind this data is to see if the City is doing a reasonable job of balancing space for jobs with space for housing. People will make decisions about commuting on their own, over which the City does not have a lot of influence. However, the City does have influence over how much land is available for housing and jobs. Vice Chair Chandorkar said that answered his question. Ms. Stiteler said this number reflects the jobs to housing ratio.

Vice Chair Chandorkar next asked about the City's investment of \$15.5 million in the urban centers, which is about 38% of what was expected, based on budget documents. Mr. Churchill said this number reflects that some projects are still underway in the budget period. It also may reflect estimates coming in lower than what the budget anticipated. He said this was a startlingly small number, but added that perhaps, projects are still underway from the prior budget period.

Vice Chair Chandorkar asked if there was demographic data based on age, ethnicity, and so on, and if the City collected that. Mr. Churchill noted that this was not reported in Community Indicators, but those data are collected. Staff is working on a demographics profile based on Census data and from American Community Survey, which is totally devoted to that demographic information. Vice Chair Chandorkar asked if that data should be put into Community Indicators to possibly show trends.

Vice Chair Chandorkar asked further if there was an objective measure of the quality of life that Redmond can give, in the sense that Redmond claims to have a vibrant downtown. He wanted to determine how vibrant it really was and if it were becoming more vibrant, with additional younger people coming to the area for nightlife, or if the commute were getting better, or if parks and recreation quality were improving, for example. He asked if there was a way to measure that quality of life. Mr. Churchill said the best way to measure something subjective like that is to survey people, which is done by the City biennially. The closest survey question to Vice Chair Chandorkar's concern is how connected people feel to the community. Other questions deal with parks and public safety. Chair Gregory noted that this information was included in the Parks report, for example, but said quality of life was a subjective matter. Vice Chair Chandorkar agreed, and said that the closest thing to determining quality of life was indeed best determined through a survey. He would like those survey results to be put into the Community Indicators report to create a more complete document.

Chair Gregory asked about the rise in property taxes, and if that reflected a rise in rates or an increase in property coming online. Mr. Churchill has asked that question of the City's financial experts, and said it was a combination of both those factors. Property tax rate increases are a small part of this rise, but the much larger part is new property coming online.

REPORTS/SCHEDULING/TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING(S):

Ms. Stiteler noted that she had no new reports. The City Council meeting on the night prior to this meeting was cancelled. The next meeting for the Commission will be June 13th. She added that the Derby Days event, the weekend of the 14th of July, is looking for volunteers. Chair Gregory said the Commission would talk more about Derby Days. In the past, the Planning Commissioners have helped staff the City Council booth.

ADJOURN

Chair Gregory adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:50 p.m.

Minutes Approved On: Planning Commission Chair