

**CITY OF EDMONDS  
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES  
December 14, 2005**

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Chair Young called the regular meeting of the Planning Board to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Public Safety Complex, 250 – 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

James Young, Chair  
Janice Freeman, Vice Chair  
Virginia Cassutt  
Judith Works  
John Dewhirst  
Jim Crim  
Don Henderson

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Cary Guenther

**STAFF PRESENT**

Rob Chave, Planning Division Manager  
Karin Noyes, Recorder

Board Member Guenther was excused from the meeting.

**READING/APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBER WORKS MOVED TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 9, 2005 AS CORRECTED. BOARD MEMBER FREEMAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**BOARD MEMBER CRIM MOVED TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 16, 2005 AS CORRECTED. BOARD MEMBER WORKS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGENDA**

The Board agreed to add “Election of Planning Board Officers for 2006” as Item 8b on the agenda.

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

There was no one in the audience to provide comments during this portion of the meeting.

**DISCUSSION ON JANUARY STATUS REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL ON PLANNING BOARD PROJECTS**

Mr. Chave recalled that the Board previously agreed to develop a report to the City Council on the Board’s 2006 work program, identifying current projects and the Board’s priorities for the coming year. This report could be given to the City Council by the Board’s Chair or Vice-Chair during the Council’s work meeting on January 24, 2006. Giving this update to the Council would provide an opportunity for them to give feedback or guidance back to the Planning Board. He

emphasized that the January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting would not be a joint meeting of the Planning Board and City Council; only a status report. However, the intent would be to assure that there is a clear understanding by the Council of what the Planning Board's current work program and priorities are.

Chair Young reported that he and Vice Chair Freeman met with Mayor Haakenson on December 4<sup>th</sup>. At that time, the Mayor recommended the Board put any further consideration of amendments to implement the Downtown Plan on the back burner until the second half of 2006. On the other hand, the City's Economic Development Director, Ms. Gerend, also expressed her concern about postponing the downtown issue. If the issue was postponed another six months and then the Board and City Council spent an additional six months in review, it could be more than a year before any decisions are made by the City Council. She pointed out that until the downtown issue is resolved, there would be nothing they could offer business owners to maintain and aggressively pursue their business interests unless the downtown issue is resolved. He said that he and Vice Chair Freeman discussed their concern about the message this would send to Edmonds as a whole and to the downtown merchants, specifically. Vice Chair Freeman suggested it would be appropriate for the Board to send a clear message to the City Council that they are still very much interested in completing the Downtown Plan implementation. The remainder of the Board concurred.

Mr. Chave requested further direction from the Board regarding the format of the report to the City Council. He noted that the Board already has a good idea of what has to be done in 2006. He suggested it would be appropriate for them to identify the projects in the report, prioritize them, and inquire if the City Council concurs with the consensus reached by the Board.

Board Member Works said she would be very concerned about postponing work on the Downtown Plan implementation since there is a current moratorium on buildings over 25 feet in the downtown area. Because of this moratorium, it is not likely that any development would occur, and there are properties that need to be developed or redeveloped now. She referred to a news report she heard on television just prior to the meeting, in which small business owners in Seattle were interviewed; one has already gone out of business, another is going out of business, and one is just hanging on. The segment ended with the statement that small businesses are having a rough time because large retailers can offer continuous sales and discounts. The environment is very competitive, and if the Board lets the downtown issue drop, they will send the message that they don't care about small business owners. Board Member Cassutt said she recently spoke with three business owners in the downtown who indicated that they are looking for space in other locations when their leases in downtown Edmonds expire. In their minds, they feel the City Council does not support business in downtown Edmonds.

Board Member Crim referred to the list of pending work items for 2006 and noted that the first three items (2004-2006 Comprehensive Plan Amendments, Highway 99 Implementation, and Neighborhood Centers) are high priorities for the Board to work on in 2006. The next two items (Shoreline Master Plan Update and Community Development Code Rewrite) have to be done regardless of what other items the Board decides to work on. He suggested the last item (Downtown Plan Implementation) should also be identified as a priority, as well. They should send a recommendation to the City Council that some action be taken so that business owners in Edmonds understand they are an important part of the community. Mr. Chave said the Board could certainly notify the City Council that they plan to proceed with their work on the Downtown Plan implementation unless the City Council's previous direction to the Board is modified.

Mr. Chave explained that the Comprehensive Plan Amendments must be done, and the Streetscape Plan, Highway 99 Plan, Economic Development Plan, and Port Strategic and Master Plans would all be included as elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The Shoreline Master Plan Update and the Edmonds Community Development Code (ECDC) Re-write are both projects the Board and staff will be working on throughout 2006 and 2007. He noted that several items have been referred to the Board on different occasions which can be dealt with as part of the ECDC Re-write Project.

Board Member Dewhirst asked how the Port's Master and Strategic Plans are related to the Shoreline Master Plan. Mr. Chave explained that since the Port's Master Plan has been adopted in the City's Comprehensive Plan, it must be consistent with the Shoreline Master Plan. He further explained that the Port would like their new Master Plan adopted into the Comprehensive Plan as soon as possible.

**APPROVED**

Board Member Henderson agreed that Implementation of the Downtown Plan should be identified on the Board's 2006 Work Program as a priority. The Board should work to forward a recommendation to the City Council and get the issue back in their lap as soon as possible.

Mr. Chave suggested that along with the written report to the City Council, the Board could send a representative to the January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting to present an oral report, as well. This would allow the City Council to ask questions and gain a clear understanding of the Board's position.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that Downtown Plan Implementation should be the first item on the pending work program for 2006, followed by Highway 99 Implementation and Neighborhood Center Plans. He suggested that this work should be done first so that associated changes could be incorporated into the 2005-2006 Comprehensive Plan Amendments. The report to the City Council should make it clear that while the staff and Board would start working on the Shoreline Master Program Update and the ECDC Re-write project, neither of the projects would be completed until late 2007. It would also be important to make the Council aware that both of these projects would require significant staff time and that the Board would be required to spend increasingly more time on them in the future.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that the Westgate area be added as one of the locations for a Neighborhood Center Plan. He noted that the City's Economic Development Director has been working with various owners in the Westgate area regarding redevelopment options, so it would be important to have a Neighborhood Center Plan in place as soon as possible. The remainder of the Board concurred.

Chair Young pointed out that the City Council has identified economic development as one of their top priorities over the past year. The Board forwarded a recommendation to them that represented what they thought would be the best approach for economic development in the downtown, and it was turned down. He said it would be helpful if the City Council could provide a statement to indicate where economic development falls into their scheme of priorities. He said that while it is important for the City to us on implementation of the Highway 99 Plan, the City Council should recognize that it would take a significant amount of time before the City recognizes any significant changes. On the other hand, there is a potential for immediate improvements in the downtown, Westgate and Five Corner areas. The Board concurred that it would be helpful to find out the City Council's plans for economic development in 2006.

Board Member Dewhirst recalled that when the Board considered the rezone proposal for the gas station property on SR-104, they discussed that the area is ready for redevelopment once the City makes up their mind about what they want to do. He suggested that this area be considered as part of the Board's work on implementation of the Highway 99 Plan.

Chair Young said it would also be helpful for the City Council to provide direction about whether or not they want to consider the establishment of Citywide policies that are business friendly. He referred to the recent proposal from The Hotel Group for property on Sunset Avenue. He recalled that the Board allowed the applicant's representative to keep coming back to tailor the zone to meet the needs of a particular business. Board Member Cassutt expressed her frustration that the applicant did exactly what needed to be done to meet the Comprehensive Plan requirements that were established by the City Council. Because the application was denied, The Hotel Group will likely relocate to another city and take their 200 employees out of Edmonds.

Board Member Crim expressed his frustration that while the Board knows what the City Council is against, they don't have a clear understanding of what they are in favor of except preserving the character of Edmonds, and there is no definition to indicate exactly what that means. The remainder of the Board agreed that the City Council must identify the direction they want to go with economic development in the City.

Board Member Dewhirst reminded the Board that they are a tool for the City Council, and they should seek direction from the major policy makers. Board Member Cassutt agreed but said she doesn't believe the City Council has a clear direction right now. Board Member Dewhirst said the Board must still give them an opportunity to provide further direction. Board Member Crim suggested that perhaps they should be more vocal by providing a cover letter along with the report to make the Board's unanimous consensus clear to the City Council. The Board also discussed the possibility of getting reports of their discussions and recommendations published in the local newspapers to counteract situations of erroneous information getting

out to the public. Board Member Henderson agreed that the Board should send a strong statement to the City Council regarding their priorities for 2006. Then the City Council should feel free to provide their comments.

Rather than using the term economic development, Board Member Crim suggested the report make it clear that ordinances are needed to increase money flow into the City, while maintaining the character of the downtown area. Mr. Chave suggested that the term "sustainability" would address all of the issues raised by the Board during their discussion. Sustainability means to make sure a community is stable, vital, active and can sustain itself. This term could be used to describe why economic development, employment opportunities, etc. are important. He offered to create a few sample definitions that represent the concept of "sustainability." Board Member Freeman suggested that whatever terminology is used, the Board should provide a clear definition to illustrate their intent and explain why it is important.

Board Member Crim cautioned that if the report and cover letter are too difficult, the Board could miss an opportunity to let the City Council know that they feel the City must increase revenues. They agreed that the report should summarize some of the issues and concerns that have been raised by the Board such as businesses leaving the City, the Citizen Advisory Committee being ready to throw up their hands in frustration, the current moratorium in the downtown that prevents vacant properties from being redeveloped, and the general state of small businesses in the City.

The Board asked Mr. Chave to draft a mission statement and report for 2006, using the comments provided by the Board. The Board could review the document and provide additional comments and ideas at their first meeting in January. They agreed that the report should emphasize their belief that implementation of the Downtown Plan should not be postponed any longer. They asked Mr. Chave to email a copy of the draft report to each of the Board Members so that they could provide their comments and thoughts.

If the City Council is concerned about preserving the character of downtown Edmonds, Board Member Dewhirst said he would like a response from them about why the draft Design Guidelines were never approved. He noted that the Board spent a significant amount of time working on the document, and now it is probably out of date. He said he is concerned that the Board could spend a lot of time dealing with the issue of implementing the Downtown Plan, only to have the same thing happen to their proposal.

Mr. Chave reported that the Architectural Design Board is currently in the process of reviewing the draft Design Guidelines, and they have made very few changes from the document that was forwarded to the City Council by the Planning Board. When the Architectural Design Board has completed their review, the document would be forwarded back to the City Council for adoption. The Board agreed that the report to the City Council should also mention the Board's desire that the Design Guidelines be adopted as soon as possible. Board Member Dewhirst pointed out that much of what the Board would be doing in the coming year would require design elements.

#### **ELECTION OF PLANNING BOARD OFFICERS FOR 2006**

**BOARD MEMBER WORKS NOMINATED BOARD MEMBER FREEMAN TO BE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING BOARD FOR 2006.**

**BOARD MEMBER CRIM MOVED THAT NOMINATIONS BE CLOSED. BOARD MEMBER CASSUTT SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**THE BOARD UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE NOMINATION OF BOARD MEMBER FREEMAN TO BE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING BOARD FOR 2006.**

**BOARD MEMBER CRIM NOMINATED BOARD MEMBER DEWHIRST AS VICE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING BOARD FOR 2006.**

**BOARD MEMBER DEWHIRST NOMINATED BOARD MEMBER CRIM AS VICE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING BOARD FOR 2006.**

**APPROVED**

**BOARD MEMBER WORKS MOVED THAT NOMINATIONS BE CLOSED. BOARD MEMBER CASSUTT SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**AT THE REQUEST OF BOARD MEMBER CRIM, BOARD MEMBER DEWHIRST WITHDREW HIS NOMINATION.**

**THE BOARD UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE NOMINATION OF BOARD MEMBER DEWHIRST AS VICE CHAIR OF THE BOARD FOR 2006.**

#### **REVIEW OF EXTENDED AGENDA**

No comments were provided regarding the extended agenda.

#### **PLANNING BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS**

Chair Young thanked the Board for allowing him to serve as chair for the past two years, and the remaining Board Members thanked Chair Young for his service. Chair Young expressed his belief that the Board should feel good about the things they tried to accomplish over the past year. The Board's role is to listen to the public and make recommendations to the City Council that are in the best interest of the community as a whole, and that is what the Board did.

#### **PLANNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Board Member Crim said he appreciated the opportunity to hold a workshop discussion around the table in a less formal setting. The remainder of the Board agreed that they would like to hold similar workshops around the table in the future as the need arises. The Board also agreed that they would be in favor of holding a retreat after the City Council's January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. They all agreed that March would be an appropriate time for the retreat.

Board Member Crim said he believes the work the Board did in 2005 was productive. However, he suggested they might need to be more outspoken to the City Council in the future so that the intent of their recommendations are clear.

Board Member Freeman said that, as the new Chair of the Board, she would present the Board's report to the City Council on January 24<sup>th</sup>. However, she said it would be helpful for the other Board Members to attend, as well. She said she would like to rely on all of the Board Members to answer questions raised by the City Council after the formal report is presented.

Board Member Dewhirst said he was disappointed to learn that the City's Traffic Engineer, Darrell Smith, has taken another job and would be leaving the City. He voiced his opinion that Mr. Smith did a great job in the relatively short time he was with the City; more than the last four or five traffic engineers combined. He noted that Mr. Smith was able to obtain a lot of grant funding for City projects. The Board concurred.

Board Member Dewhirst referred the Board Members to the packet of materials they received that were copied from the documents he collected at the recent American Planning Association Conference. He advised that the materials deal primarily with cottage housing and Oregon's Proposition 37.

Board Member Freeman said she looks forward to serving as chair of the Planning Board in 2006 and receiving feedback and help from her fellow Board Members.

Board Member Cassutt requested that staff provide a new list of Board Members, including mailing addresses, email address and telephone numbers.

**APPROVED**

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

**APPROVED**