Commissioners Present: Richard Wright, Chair
Robert Larsen, First Vice Chair
Maria Ambalada
George Hurst
Doug Jones

Commissioners Absent: Chad Braithwaite, Second Vice Chair
Michael Wojack

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at the City of Lynnwood Permit Center by Chair Wright at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes
1. Approval of Minutes of the August 28, 2014 Meeting

   Motion made by Commissioner Larsen, seconded by Commissioner Ambalada, to approve the August 28, 2014 Meeting Minutes. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

2. Approval of Minutes of the September 11, 2014 Meeting

   Motion made by Commissioner Larsen, seconded by Commissioner Ambalada, to approve the September 11, 2014 Meeting Minutes. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Citizen Comments
None

Public Hearing
None
1. Draft Introduction Element of the Comprehensive Plan (first review)

Deputy Director Loch presented the first review of the Introduction Element noting that the proposed changes are shown in the track-change version. The intent of the changes is to update the text and to help the Introductory Element be useful as the basis for all of the other elements to a greater degree than it was before. More detail was also included in terms of future growth and the City's ultimate and mature size. This will be helpful for the readers as they get into the other elements. Currently this information is primarily in the Land Use Element. Deputy Director Loch solicited Commission comment on this element.

Commissioner Larsen stated he was at the Economic Development Committee Meeting last night and noticed there is a lot of interest in building the job and tax base of Lynnwood and trying to attract the “brain” workforce for the Seattle area. With that in mind, he pointed out that the tone of the new rewrite is very different than the tone of the struck-out Introduction, and that the tone of the struck-out Introduction is probably more in line with what the Economic Development Committee is trying to accomplish. He hopes this draft is getting reviewed by other people. He thinks the new rewrite includes good and useful information such as information regarding PSRC, the state, laws, and rules, etc., but he hopes they don’t lose track of “beating the drum”. He noted a typo in one spot where it referred to Highway 9 instead of Highway 99.

Commissioner Larsen referred to Introduction page 9, RELATION OF THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO OTHER PLANS, BACKGROUND, TECHNICAL STUDIES AND LEGISLATION, and commented that his understanding is that the role of the Comprehensive Plan is critical to the operation of the City. Its job is to be the policy basis behind the regulations. Without these policies he wondered where the regulations would come from or be justified. He recommended a sentence indicating that the Comprehensive Plan is the basis for regulations of the City. He suggested the following: This Comprehensive Plan contains goals and policies to guide and inform the foundation of regulations that govern the day-to-day operations of the City. He noted that the way the draft is written it reads like an apology.

Commissioner Larsen referred to page 12 and noted that neighborhood had been changed to community. He asked if the City is going to move toward forming neighborhoods. If we are, it might be important to leave that word in there to start laying that groundwork. Deputy Director Loch thought that was a good point.

Commissioner Larsen commented that as he was reading this he saw a notion that we’re going to do design review or design guidelines, that we’re going to do a street and landscape tree plan, that we’re going to move the city hall and library
to City Center, and that we’re going to have a renewable energy program. He pointed out that there is already a large Sustainability section in the current Plan. He commented that this is revolutionary stuff and asked where these ideas are coming from.

Commissioner Ambalada commented that the Economic Development Group under the Mayor’s Office is comprised of members who mostly are not residents of Lynnwood. She thought that these individuals were selected by the Economic Development Department. She suggested that Deputy Director Loch discuss these issues with the Economic Development Director Kleitsch and Mary Monroe and see where the Mayor’s Economic Development group is taking the City and if they are perhaps taking the role of the Planning Commission. She concurred with Commissioner Larsen’s concerns noting that it is confusing to her what the role of the Planning Commission is. The way the City is going seems somewhat like a free-for-all.

Deputy Director Loch replied to Commissioner Ambalada’s question regarding how staff would dovetail the different plans that are being developed simultaneously. He said he would offer some ideas, but also would look to the Planning Commission for ideas on how to do this. There is a strong initiative right now to update the City’s Economic Development Plan and the Comprehensive Plan’s Economic Development Element. The citizen advisory committee is working concurrently with the Planning Commission as they go through that element. The same thing is also happening with the Parks Comprehensive Plan. There are also updates to the Water and Sewer Utility Plans and the City’s Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Those are being developed outside of the Planning Commission and ultimately will need to be dovetailed and integrated in. What staff is doing is developing a first cut of what they think is a solid general update of the Comprehensive Plan’s wording and other technical edits. Around March of next year the other draft plans will be released and be ready to go through their legislative process. He thinks there will be some last-minute adjustments to both to make sure they are fully consistent. Ultimately staff wants the Comprehensive Plan to adopt the other plans by reference. At that point it will be critical that the various plans are consistent.

Regarding the questions about what the Comprehensive Plan should include, Deputy Director Loch noted that the purpose is to provide high-level, policy guidance for the City. All future actions should be consistent with it. The current Comprehensive Plan has a whole element on sustainability, but staff thought this was over-reaching because the City doesn’t have much control over some of the things mentioned there. When looking at the Plan to see what the City actually does have a role in, staff identified the items in the Community Character Element instead of having a standalone element. He thinks as they work through each of these draft updates, a relatively-small number of substantive issues will emerge and those topics will be ideal for our public outreach. Community Development isn’t overseeing or managing the work of other City Departments.
as they update these ancillary plans, but is working in concert with those Departments.

Chair Wright asked if the City is losing its vision with these changes because a lot of how the Comprehensive Plan is drafted is from the visioning process the City went through. A lot of the proposed changes are a change in writing style and are resulting in a more sanitary document. He wondered if that was the intent.

Commissioner Larsen concurred, and noted they need to be very careful about the words they use and the words they leave out. He commented that it’s appropriate that they have staff that doesn’t necessarily live in the City because we should be part of the region and not just Lynnwood with its own boundaries. He noted that staff is held to professional standards.

Commissioner Hurst said that as he read this he was concerned about a lack of discussion about private residences and single-family residences. There is discussion about high-density development, but not neighborhoods. Commissioner Hurst spoke to the importance of code enforcement to preserve neighborhoods.

Commissioner Larsen agreed and stated he has noticed with the push for higher densities that nobody wants to talk about the value of home ownership. He thinks home ownership is key to being a committed citizen in the community.

Commissioner Ambalada noted that without code enforcement the Council is trying to come up with mandatory garbage collection regulations.

Chair Wright referred to the mandate for the City to provide housing for 10,000 new residents and asked where they could possibly put them. He acknowledged that change is going to come, but the Planning Commission does have control over how this happens and should ensure it occurs in a way that is livable and sustainable for the community. He agreed that it is important to be sensitive to single-family housing, but noted that renters can have just as much passion for the City as a homeowner can. He thinks ownership is essential to a lot of things, but that it is not required for community pride. He commented that the Introduction is a challenging element because it touches all the aspects of the subsequent elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Ambalada concurred and stated that public input and engagement is critical when it comes to neighborhood planning. Chair Wright noted that people show up when things impact them directly such as the mobile home park issue several years ago. He agreed that public input is vital, but commented on the difficulty of getting people to come in.
Commissioner Hurst referred to the first sentence which describes Lynnwood as an "ethnically diverse community" and asked what this is based on. Commissioner Larsen noted that this came up at the Economic Development Committee meeting. He thought someone had said that approximately 60% of the population is non-white. Deputy Director Loch thought that the number was closer to 40%, but offered to get more specifics on this.

Deputy Director Loch thanked the Commission for their input and encouraged them to continue with their observations. The idea of including and maintaining some emotion in the document is a good point. He noted that the Commission is working at a disadvantage in that they only get one element at a time so they are working in isolation. Also, on the topic of population growth, when they reviewed the Land Use Element there was just a placeholder for future discussion to determine where the population growth would be located and how. This is still an unanswered question.

2. Draft Community Character Element of the Comprehensive Plan (first review)

Senior Planner Todd Hall explained that the Community Character Element is a new element that blends two existing elements – Energy & Sustainability and Cultural & Historical Resources -- with other topics. He described each section of the Community Character Element.

Questions Mr. Hall asked the Commission to consider were: Are some of these things achievable? Is this what Lynnwood really wants to focus on? Do we want to do these for the City Center? For Highway 99? For all the sections? Regarding Sustainability, the current element is very global and more of a world view rather than focusing on Lynnwood itself. This section received a significant update. This section has been shared with other City departments.

Senior Planner Gloria Rivera explained that "wayfinding" was an idea that was mentioned a lot during past visioning meetings. Other policies related to signage for businesses and enhancing community character and image. Goal #14 on page 16 is Healthy Communities. This would continue Healthy Communities programs, continuing to ensure ample sidewalks are provided along with pedestrian amenities along sidewalks. Goal #15 is Healthy Foods and would promote access to healthy foods in the community, continue to support the Farmers Market, getting healthy foods into the school cafeterias and food banks, working with the community garden at the Lynnwood Senior Center and expanding the Community Pea Patch program. The Historic Preservation section is highly related to the existing Cultural and Historic Resources Element. The Culture & Diversity section includes goals established in the current Cultural and Historical Resources Element.
Commissioner Doug Jones referred to the Healthy Communities/Active Living goal #14 where it refers to sidewalks. He asked who checks existing sidewalks for safety and how ongoing sidewalk repairs are funded. He has a sidewalk in front of his house where kids fall every day because the sections are uneven.

Regarding supporting healthy food in the school cafeteria and the food bank, Commissioner Jones asked what the City’s role in this would be. Deputy Director Loch noted that “support” may not be the right word. He suggested that they could use another word such as “encourage”. He thought the intent in these sections was to “promote” or “advocate”, versus provide funding support. He noted that this could be clarified. Regarding sidewalks, the Plan is intended to help the City establish priorities. The priorities are then considered by the City Council as they allocate resources to capital improvements, repairs and services.

Councilmember AuBuchon noted that as far as uneven sidewalks go, there is a machine that will grind one side down to make it smooth with the other side. All that needs to be done is to report it to Public Works. Senior Planner Rivera commented that the intent is that if the City is promoting an active living lifestyle and accordingly that streets have sidewalks, lighting, etc.

Chair Wright said he appreciated the next section which encourages private owners to help preserve and restore historic sites. He noted that many of the sidewalks in the City can be hard to access because some homeowners don’t do the necessary maintenance. He pointed out that there is a civic responsibility that we all have to maintain the sidewalk in front of our homes. He also agreed that “support” needs to be clarified. There was consensus to review and clarify the use of the word “support”.

Commissioner Ambalada noted that sidewalks are on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), but there hasn’t been money to fund it. She wondered if it would be funded this year.

Commissioner Hurst referred to page 9 where it talks about what Lynnwood has done, he said he wasn’t aware of any incandescent lighting for street lights. Deputy Director Loch suggested they could use the phrase, “replace inefficient . . .” There was consensus to make that change.

Commissioner Hurst referred to “dark sky” on page 23 where it refers to preserving the dark night skies in Lynnwood’s residential neighborhoods and asked if this was limited only to residential neighborhoods. Senior Plan Hall noted it should be citywide not just residential.

Commissioner Larsen suggested left justification of the document for easier reading. He also noted there were some Sub-Goals in the Character Element, but not in the Introduction Element. He recommended consistency with this.

Deputy Director Loch commented that once staff has a draft of each element
they will go through the entire document and try to ensure all the elements read and look the same.

Senior Planner Rivera noted that if the Commission wants to address neighborhoods this is probably the element to put it in. She noted that the Community Development Department is interested in it, but getting funding will be a challenge. Commissioner Larsen concurred and noted that it comes with a lot of implications. Deputy Director Loch noted that staff has created a few draft maps of what they thought the neighborhoods might be. Commissioner Ambalada noted that in 2006 the City created a neighborhood resolution. Chair Wright said he’d love to see the draft maps and to see them overlaid with the census data. There was general consensus that the Commission was interested in seeing neighborhoods addressed in the next iteration of the Community Character Element.

Council Liaison Report

Councilmember AuBuchon had the following comments:

- He expressed appreciation for the Planning Commission’s work on this Comprehensive Plan update. He clarified that the difference between a body like the Planning Commission and the Economic Development Advisory Committee was established by the Mayor for the Mayor’s purposes. The Planning Commission is codified as an advisory board to the City Council.

- He referred to the Planning Commission’s concerns about joint meetings and direct input to the City Council. He stated that he recently made a scheduling motion to have the Planning Commission as well as the Historic Commission come in and give the Council its annual report and input into the budget process. The motion was seconded and amended by Councilmember Roberts to limit the groups to talking just about the budget. They also would be limited to two spokespeople and a half hour. That amendment passed. Commissioner Larsen asked if Councilmember AuBuchon knew why that amendment had been made. Councilmember AuBuchon did not know. Chair Wright said he appreciates the opportunity, but he thinks that without the opportunity to discuss what their priorities are it will be hard for the Planning Commission to formulate its opinions. Councilmember AuBuchon reiterated that he had not been in support of the amendment. His intention was to have a full-blown review and also get the Planning Commission’s input on the budget.

Commissioner Hurst expressed concern that at the recent City Council Hearing on the Highway 99 zoning the Planning Commission’s recommendation wasn’t fully conveyed to the City Council. He added that it also didn’t look like the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting were provided to the City Council. He wondered how the City Council looks at the Planning Commission’s input
because they did not receive it in this instance. Councilmember AuBuchon said he agreed 100%. Commissioner Hurst wondered how they could get more input into the Council deliberations.

Commissioner Ambalada suggested that if the Council is going to make up an ordinance out of the policies that the Planning Commission has submitted to them, the Planning Commission should have an opportunity to review it first.

Chair Wright noted that the Council is the policy making body and they can proceed however they like. He noted that in this particular case where the Planning Commission had specified that they wanted certain language to be transmitted to the Council, perhaps it either needed to be a decision letter from the Planning Commission or the Planning Commission needs to actually memorialize that provision within the ordinance itself as a “Whereas” so that when the Council reviews the ordinance they have it. He commented that in the past the Council has been provided Planning Commission minutes. Apparently they didn’t do that in this case. He noted that when the Planning Commission is forwarding specific language it would be nice to know that the Council at least had the opportunity to read it or have it presented to them.

Councilmember AuBuchon offered to take the Planning Commission’s recommendation regarding the Highway 99 Zoning ordinance back to Council to offer it as an amendment when they vote on it. Chair Wright said he didn’t know if it needed to be an amendment, but it certainly should be provided as part of the deliberation that the Planning Commission put forward to them.

Deputy Director Loch stated that the Planning Commission should look to staff to make sure that they convey their recommendations articulately to the Council. He stated he would find out what happened in this instance. Staff takes that obligation seriously just as they do with comments from the public.

Commissioner Larsen thanked Commission Hurst for putting in the time to go and report back to the Planning Commission. Commissioner Jones asked about having a Commissioner Liaison at the Council meetings similar to the Council Liaison. Chair Wright thought there used to be a time when the commissions would come to the Council. This went away during the recession with budget constraints. Mr. Hikel agreed and added that at one time early on there was a member of the Commission who was the liaison to the City Council and attended meetings. Chair Wright suggested that they could address this on an issue-by-issue basis. Commissioner Hurst recommended that if the Planning Commission deliberates on an ordinance they could have someone go to the Council as a liaison. There was discussion about different ways to address this. Deputy Director Loch reiterated that it is important that staff present the Planning Commission’s work and outcomes. If they do that well then the Planning Commission won’t need a member at each City Council meeting. He stated he
will ensure staff does a more thorough job of communicating the Commission’s work.

Commissioner Larsen discussed his work supporting another planning commission where they used one-page resolutions with findings, facts, conclusions, and recommendations that were kept in a notebook for reference. He has believed that the commissioners’ input goes into the minutes which are forwarded to the Council. The minutes are very detailed and for those committed enough to read them are a very valuable tool. He wants to make sure those minutes are going to the Council.

Chair Wright recommended that they either start to memorialize in the recitals or they do draft resolutions. This would quantify what might already be reflected in the minutes in a concise statement.

Commissioner Larsen asked about his or other commissioners’ roles if they go to City Council meetings. Is it as a planning commissioner or a citizen? Chair Wright replied that would be tied to the purpose of why they are speaking and should be clarified at the time they are speaking.

Chair Wright solicited permission to return to item C on the agenda to allow public comment. There was unanimous consent to return to Item C to allow public comment.

Citizens Comments

Ted Hikel, 3820 – 191st Place SW, Lynnwood, stated that the topic of neighborhoods is very important to him and his neighbors who are known as the LCIA (Lynnwood Community Involvement Association). If the City wants to have a pre-made organization, they are already there.

Director’s Report

None.

Commissioners’ Comments

None.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

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Richard Wright, Chair