Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Larsen at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of Minutes of the October 23, 2014 Meeting

   Motion made by Commissioner Jones, seconded by Commissioner Braithwaite, to approve the October 23 Meeting Minutes. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Citizen Comments

None

Public Hearing

None

Work Session

1. Draft Parks Element (first review)

Associate Planner Michele Szafran presented the Draft Parks Element as part of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Amendment. The reason for the current review is simply formatting to make it consistent with the other elements. The Parks Master Plan is currently underway and is set to come forth in early 2015. At that point staff would look at revising the existing Parks Element to incorporate reference to that.
Commissioner Jones referred to page 19 under the Demand and Need within City Limits table and asked how they would obtain the acres. Ms. Szafran noted that there are no substantive changes to this so this is something that is in the current Comprehensive Plan. Director Krauss explained that while Lynnwood has a good parks system, they have not made tremendous investments in it for a long time. Even if they did have money there is a shortage of land. The City has made some progress in acquiring park space in the MUGA (Municipal Urban Growth Area) and has been buying land slowly up in the area around Lund’s Gulch. This wouldn’t be active recreation, but would be passive. Staff is working on a grant right now that would purchase 20 acres on the north side of Lund’s Gulch which is the site of a controversial subdivision proposal in Snohomish County. He commented the amount of acres per thousand people ratio is probably on the high side. He thinks at some point the City will have to grapple with making the most of the facilities we already have. He noted that Lynnwood has never adopted a Park Impact Fee, but there have been conversations off and on about this. Since most of the City is already developed there doesn’t seem to be much reason to do it.

Commissioner Braithwaite noted that there was a Parks Plan presented a couple years ago that had some formulas in it. His comment at that point was that it’s not really realistic to achieve those ratios. Director Krauss commented on the recreation value of the Recreation Center. Commissioner Braithwaite concurred and noted they need to meet their recreation needs in more creative ways. Vice Chair Larsen asked if the Planning Commission should articulate that. Director Krauss thought that could be useful since this discussion has resurfaced from time to time.

Commissioner Hurst referred to the 93 acres in the Swamp Creek Corridor and asked if that is descriptive of what the land is. Director Krauss thought that it was.

Commissioner Wojack asked if parks have to be defined by four boundaries or if they can be walking trails through the city. Director Krauss commented that as long as it is public space it would count towards the parks space. Commissioner Wojack referred to page 20 and asked if they can specify park locations when they go to acquire land in the MUGA. Director Krauss replied that the MUGA area is developing so fast that this would be difficult now. In all likelihood, when the City annexes this area they will be annexing a lot of demand for parks without a lot of land. Director Krauss added that the City did acquire some land for the Doc Hageman Park.

Deputy Director Loch clarified that the only thing that has changed in the Parks Element is the formatting. He explained that the draft Park, Arts, Recreation, and Conservation Plan being prepared by the Parks Department will include participation by the Planning Commission.
2. **Draft Housing Profile and discussion of Housing Element**

Kristina Gallant, Analyst for the Alliance for Housing Affordability, presented the *Draft Affordable Housing Profile* for Lynnwood as contained in the Planning Commission’s packet. She explained that housing is considered to be affordable if households aren’t paying more than 30% of their income for their housing, whether renters or owners. This will be of a higher concern for lower income households that may have to sacrifice in order to afford housing. Income levels are referred to as they relate to Area Median Income (AMI). The AMI benchmark used in this report is the HUD’s regional median income which is higher than Snohomish County’s median income. In Lynnwood, 77% of the extremely low households (below 30% AMI) are cost burdened. 65% of the very low income households are cost burdened. Only 20% of the middle income households are cost burdened. Ms. Gallant discussed subsidized versus workforce housing. Subsidized units receive some kind of ongoing funding to augment the rent. Workforce housing units receive some kind of upfront funding. Usually, in exchange for that, they have to keep rents at a certain lower level.

The *Population and Community* section uses a lot of census data as well as information from other sources such as the Housing Authority and the Assessor. The population has been pretty stable since the 90’s and at this point Lynnwood is pretty much built out. However, the County has projected quite strong growth over the next 20 years with a large portion of that coming through redevelopment. Overall, the City has smaller household size (persons per household) compared to the county and a higher share of renters. Median income is lower. Overall, 59% of the renters are cost burdened. 37% of the homeowners are cost burdened. By income level, there is a really big improvement as income rises. Also, Lynnwood is one of the few cities in Snohomish County that has a jobs-housing ratio that is in surplus to the number of employed people.

The *Existing Housing Stock* section shows that Lynnwood’s housing is split almost evenly between single-family and multi-family with a heavy concentration (46%) built between 1960 and 1979. Redevelopment potential will probably be coming from this housing stock. There is a significant local supply of assisted housing. There are 1,307 units of subsidized housing across 22 properties. Over half of that is in the Section 8 housing program. There are another 1,430 units of workforce housing across 14 properties.

Commissioner Hurst asked if Section 8 is even funded anymore. Ms. Gallant stated that last year through the sequester, funding was frozen so a lot of the housing authorities ended up burning through their reserve funding in order to keep running. Mark Smith stated that Section 8 vouchers are an ongoing source and integral piece of affordable housing.
Deputy Director Loch added that as the Commission anticipates working on the Housing Element, staff is hoping that this data will be useful. If there is additional data the Commission would like to see, they should let staff know.

Vice Chair Larsen commented on the enormity of the work involved in gathering this data for 13 cities plus the county. He thanked Ms. Gallant for her efforts.

Commissioner Wojack asked if the data for renters only looked at apartments or if it took into account people renting out rooms in their homes. Ms. Gallant said it doesn’t include renting single family homes, or shared housing.

Director Krauss referred to some of the older multifamily housing stock which is growing increasingly distressed. He asked if the condition of the property is data that can be factored in. Ms. Gallant noted there is some data available through HUD which assesses fundamental housing conditions. She will see what she can find out with that. Commissioner Braithwaite thought the information could be found in the County Assessor’s data under “improvements”. Ms. Gallant noted that the Buildable Lands Report also contains some information about this under “percentage through redevelopment”. Commissioner Braithwaite wondered if the density of the existing apartment buildings can be increased when redevelopment occurs. Director Krauss commented that some of them might be able to increase density.

Commissioner Hurst said he’d like to see the data for neighboring cities. Ms. Gallant noted that some of it is in the back of the report, but she can also send the profiles for Edmonds and Mountlake Terrace to the Commission.

Commissioner Wojack asked when a building goes from apartments to condos, does it push it out of the market for medium-income people. Ms. Gallant said it depends what kind of condos they are because condos tend to be much more affordable to buy, relative to detached single family dwellings.

Vice Chair Larsen referred to the Current Challenges and Opportunities and asked if the list of things that could be done is a set of recommendations that the Commission or the Council will be looking at. If so, he noted that these are things that Lynnwood has looked at in the past so it wouldn’t require a big change in direction. Ms. Gallant replied that it is a list of things to continue pursuing that are in line with where the community is going.

Deputy Director Loch noted he didn’t see anything in the report on accessory dwellings. Ms. Gallant thought that it should have been mentioned. She noted it is a topic of discussion in other cities.

Mark Smith, Executive Director, Housing Consortium in Everett, pointed out that there is another report produced by the County, vetted by Snohomish County Tomorrow, and adopted by Snohomish County Council called Housing.
Characteristics and Needs in Snohomish County. This is a much higher level report than the housing profile done by Ms. Gallant. At the back of that report are city profiles that have 40-50 things that cities can do to help increase the supply of affordable housing and housing stock. This would be good information for the Planning Commission to consider as they update the Housing Element. Ms. Gallant offered to help research that information. The Commission thanked Ms. Gallant for her presentation.

3. Draft Essential Public Facilities Code Amendment

Director Krauss stated that the Growth Management Act (GMA) created Essential Public Facilities which are uses that are required for societies’ needs, but which people tend to not want in their own backyards. These include things such as airports, sewage treatment plants, and waste transfer stations which are needed, but are difficult to site. The GMA says that if something is determined to be an Essential Public Facility it can supersede local zoning controls and cities can’t just refuse to accept them. He explained that staff was approached by an in-patient drug and alcohol treatment facility that wants to go into the City. That is one of the uses that is specifically determined by state law to be an Essential Public Facility, but it isn’t currently allowed anywhere in the City. The proponents appear to be very credible and responsible and want to locate in one of the City’s Light Industrial areas. As a result of this situation, staff realized that the code doesn’t deal with Essential Public Facilities the way it should. After briefing Council on this situation, the Council indicated an interest in implementing an Essential Public Facilities ordinance that would cover this and other situations. Staff will be bringing a draft ordinance to the Planning Commission for review in the near future.

Commissioner Wojack asked about the vetting of the process for Essential Public Facilities. He wondered what happens if someone gets approved for an Essential Public Facility and then wants to use the property for something else later. Director Krauss explained that it is a Conditional Use Permit. A different use would be subject to the existing zoning. Commissioner Wojack asked if there are any time limits associated with this. Director Krauss replied that as long as the business stays the same it would be allowed. Commissioner Wojack asked if it matters if it is a public or private entity. Director Krauss indicated that didn’t matter as much as the service that is provided.

Commissioner Braithwaite asked about defining a zone or a code for Essential Public Facilities without designating any specific areas. Then if an Essential Public Facility comes into being you can rezone that particular land for that. Director Krauss explained that the difficult part is that some are fairly straightforward, but some are not. He spoke to the need to make an Essential Public Facility justify its need to be in your community.
Vice Chair Larsen asked about limiting the size. Director Krauss explained that the previously mentioned drug treatment facility would have 15 beds, which is the maximum for federal funding. Vice Chair Larsen referred to Site Evaluation Criteria #4 which states that the facility’s service area population should include a significant share of the host community’s population. Director Krauss commented that in this particular case the applicant can demonstrate that, but there are Essential Public Facilities where this cannot be demonstrated. Vice Chair Larsen asked about police involvement. Director Krauss commented that the Police Department is supportive of this proposal because currently when they pick up somebody their choice is to take them to the emergency room which isn’t equipped to deal with them, take them to Everett if they have the staff and if there is a bed, or let them go back on the streets. To have a credible facility in the City in coordination with the emergency providers would be a real boon. Vice Chair Larsen noted that the City of Mukilteo did a list of Essential Public Facilities in their city. He wondered if Lynnwood should do that. Director Krauss did not think that was necessary.

Commissioner Hurst referred to the definition of Essential Public Facility on page 112 which mentions group homes. To him this seems to imply it would be in a residential area. Director Krauss said it didn’t necessarily indicate that. He reiterated that the request they were talking about was looking at an industrial building in an industrial zone.

Commissioner Braithwaite asked what staff’s approach would be in drafting an ordinance. Would it be very detailed or more process oriented. Director Krauss agreed that this is an important question because state law is fairly vague. Commissioner Braithwaite commented that it seems important to be able to funnel everything into a review process to capture the differences in the uses.

Vice Chair Larsen commented that the facility they were discussing might not have that much controversy associated with it depending on the location. Director Krauss concurred.

Commissioner Wojack asked if they would have to go back to revise other zoning codes if they adopt an ordinance related to Essential Public Facilities. Director Krauss replied that if the City already makes allowances for it, they don’t need to reconsider it.

Council Liaison Report

Councilmember AuBuchon had the following comments:

- He stated that the Council’s focus right now is solely on the Budget.
- He thanked the Planning Commission for their hard work. He especially appreciated the Housing Profile discussion tonight and the Essential Public Facilities discussion.
**Director’s Report**

Director Krauss stated that the cost of operating the City is rising faster than the revenues available. This points to fundamental flaws in the way the State of Washington finances government. The Planning Department did not propose any new initiatives in the coming biennium. One of the biggest challenges the Planning Department will be dealing with is that the rate of development is speeding up. When he came here eight years ago there were 21 staff positions. They went down to 14 during the recession. Now they are up to 15. Normally, the department processes about $50 million of new development a year. They are looking at $500 million a year now. Right now there are three main projects in City Center – senior apartments, workforce housing, and a new hotel across the street from the Convention Center. Lynnwood Place is progressing quickly. Costco wants to pick up permits and start working on the building before the end of the year. That alone is a $250 million project. There is construction of the science building at Edmonds Community College along with a huge number of schools that will be rebuilt or renovated with the bond issues that the voters approved. Mixed Use housing/commercial development along Highway 99 is also happening. Staff is not sure how they will cope with this tremendous increase in the rate of new development.

Vice Chair Larsen commented that the Comprehensive Plan Update alone is a huge piece of work. Director Krauss concurred and noted that the work to go through the public hearing and approval process will take up the first half of next year.

Director Krauss continued to report that the amendment to the Alderwood Mall Area to facilitate mixed use residential/commercial developments was approved by the Council. Staff has been talking to the Council about putting through an ordinance to require mandatory garbage collection in the City. That is a code enforcement issue and won’t be coming through the Planning Commission. Another issue that the Planning Department has been working on jointly with the Police Department is the question of allowing shipping containers as accessory buildings in residential districts. There currently is nothing that prohibits it. Vice Chair Larsen said he thought it sounds like a design review question. He commented that the word "blight" comes to his mind.

**Commissioners’ Comments**

Commissioner Wojack said he has noticed a lot of the new LED streetlights have been installed.

Commissioner Braithwaite noted that Baskin Robbins on Highway 99 has turned all of their glass door fronts essentially into a giant sign. He thought that this was the result of a hole in the sign code. Director Krauss indicated they could take a look, but referred to a similar problem with the new buildings at 196th and
Highway 99 where the City had required glass walls along the highway. The buildings have indicated that this is problematic for reasons related to their use of that part of the building. As a result, the City has allowed them to put graphics on these glass walls. Commissioner Braithwaite said he had noticed this too and had brought it up at a previous meeting because all of them have filled in the glass walls.

Vice Chair Larsen referred to the email notice from staff regarding the Open Meetings Act and asked about the next step. Deputy Director Loch asked for the Commission’s opinion about this. Vice Chair Larsen indicated he would like to see this as an agenda item. He expressed concern about liability ramifications that might be associated with this for the Planning Commission. He wants to make sure that the commissioners are protected. Director Krauss thought that they were, but indicated that they could check with the City Attorney to confirm this.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

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Richard Wright, Chair