

**CITY OF MONROE  
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES  
Monday, April 30, 2018**

The regular meeting of the Monroe Planning Commission was held on **Monday, April 30, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.**, in the City Hall Council Chambers at 806 West Main Street, Monroe, WA 98272.

**CALL TO ORDER**

**Chair Tuttle** called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Planning Commission Secretary Leigh Anne Barr** called the roll.

**Commissioners Present:** Chair Tuttle, Commissioner Bull, Commissioner Jensen, Commissioner Fisher, Commissioner Rousey, Commissioner Duerksen and Commissioner Stanger

**Staff Present:** Community Development Director Ben Swanson, Principal Planner Shana Restall and Secretary Leigh Anne Barr

**COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS**

NONE

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Bull moved to accept the April 23, 2018 meeting minutes with the discussed changes. Motion seconded by Commissioner Stanger. Motion carried 7/0.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

NONE

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. **Signing of Findings - CA2018-02 –Traffic Impact Fee Amendment to MMC Chapter 20.12**

Principal Planner Shana Restall informed Planning Commission that the findings of fact are not yet ready, and will be moved to the next Planning Commission meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. **Unified Development Regulations (UDR) Variances Chapter**

Principal Planner Restall noted that the structure of the Variance and Conditional Use chapters are very similar. Currently in Monroe's code, there are no limits as to what a variance can be granted for. The new limitations section lays out the conditions under which a variance can be granted more clearly. Financial hardship is not a valid reason for a variance. Section F in the Limitations section points density changes towards the correct rezone process. Variances will be a type 4 review.

Chair Tuttle asked if new types of businesses can be granted a variance. Principal Planner Restall explained that the land use matrix is very strict on uses that are allowed or not allowed in each zone. Director Swanson noted that code interpretations could be used to have some flexibility in the code but a code amendment would be necessary for a completely new use.

Commissioner Jensen asked if the City is required by law to offer variances for undue hardships. Director Swanson explained that the City does have to offer that option. Reasonable Use permits are typically for new structures and a variance is typically for alterations to existing structures.

Commissioner Jensen would like to have Hearing Examiner in the approval section only and the rest of the chapter would reference the decision making body to make the code easier to update in the future.

Principal Planner Restall noted that section K is new to Monroe's code. The section would require that variances be recorded with the county to make them easier to find in the future. The expiration clause is same as site plan review to keep expirations consistent throughout the code.

Commissioner Jensen asked if the property sells, will the variance be invalid. Principal Planner Restall explained that the variance runs with the land, not the owner so the variance would remain. Principal Planner Restall suggested a modifications section to address changes to a variance and suggested it be administrative approval.

Chair Tuttle asked if there is a way to make variances an easier process. Director Swanson explained that variances are meant to be laborious because the applicant is asking to vary from code. Chair Tuttle inquired about making a simple variance category. Director Swanson noted it would have to be administrative decision and the hearing examiner would have to be removed to make the process simpler.

Commissioner Jensen asked what would happens if someone build something without a variance. Director Swanson explained that they would be in violation of the code. Inspections on permits also help with that issue.

## **2. Unified Development Regulations (UDR) Conditional Use Permits Chapter**

Principal Planner Restall explained that Conditional Use permits (CUP) are usually for more intense uses and uses that require public input and considerations. Conditional Use permits will be a type 4 review. Special Use permits are being removed from the code. Having a hearing examiner being the decision making body on these permits is helpful because it becomes a third party decision.

Director Swanson explained that having too many CUP in the allowed use tables is not always necessary as certain uses will not require additional scrutiny. Chair Tuttle would like to reexamine allowed land use matrix with regard to conditional use permits.

Chair Tuttle asked if CUP are required to go through a hearing examiner or if they could go through City Council instead. Director Swanson reported that any quasi-judicial action should go through a hearing examiner according to the City's insurance and city attorneys.

Chair Tuttle asked why another public hearing is needed for an extension to both variances and conditional uses permits. Director Swanson said it re-notifies the neighbors and allows them to give input on the extended process.

### 3. Unified Development Regulations (UDR) Zoning Code Amendments Chapter

Principal Planner Restall informed Planning Commission that this chapter is not yet ready and will be coming back at a later date.

#### **DISCUSSION BY COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF**

Director Swanson reported that the City is pursuing open space grants to purchase the East Monroe property. The City Administrator thought about buying the land as future mitigation, such as a wetland mitigation bank. The City Administrator's intent is not to spend city money on it, but to purchase it via grants. Parks Director Mike Farrell is applying for grants for bring to life the vision for the Cadman site.

The art selection committee had 5 pieces submitted. The committee is considering holding the \$10,000 that was meant for this art piece for the next cycle so the combined \$20,000 could be used to entice a better selection of pieces.

Commissioner Rousey presented a summary of the Revitalize Washington conference. Commissioner Rousey used Port Townsend as a good example of City staff, business owners and project managers working together to update a downtown area while not disturbing the economic success of the local businesses. Commissioner Rousey also attended a compatible infill with historic downtowns conference. The main takeaways were don't fake your town's history and don't be afraid to move on because you might lose some people but you could gain many more.

Principal Planner Restall announced that BHC isn't ready to present the design standards, so the May 7<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting will be cancelled. The May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting will also be cancelled in observance of Memorial Day.

Chair Tuttle announced that the Economic Development board will be hosting an open house on May 7<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-7pm at City Hall in Council Chambers. This will be a chance for the public to have input on a list of priorities compiled by the board. Chair Tuttle reminded staff that Planning Commission would like the sign code to come back soon.

Commissioner Jensen asked about using the land use charts to make legal nonconforming and vacant spaces a non-permitted use. Director Swanson said there can be sunset dates on non-conforming uses. Chair Tuttle is concerned making legal nonconforming and vacant spaces a non-permitted use is too aggressive. Director Swanson is concerned about legal issues with making that change.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Jensen made a motion to adjourn at 8:57p.m. Motion seconded by Commissioner Rousey. Motion carried 7/0.



Bridgette Tuttle  
Chair



Leigh Anne Barr  
Planning Commission Secretary