

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Mark Frost called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners Mark Frost (chair), Tina Lassen, Megan Ramey (at 6:15), Bill Irving, Erika Price, Amy Schlappi

ABSENT: Sue Powers

STAFF: Planning Director Dustin Nilsen, Senior Planner Kevin Liburdy, Associate Planner Jennifer Kaden

II. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S UPDATE:

Planning Director Dustin Nilsen did not have an update other than the agenda items.

III. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLAN AMENDMENT (File No. 2020-25) – Staff update

Senior Planner Kevin Liburdy provided an update on the status of the city's TSP Amendment project. Planning staff is preparing amendments including new cross-sections, revisions to project costs, updated traffic modeling, and updated maps to amend the 2011 TSP. Liburdy recalled public hearings during the WACP related to streets & transit, bike/ped, and parks and open space that led to PC recommendations to the City Council. Those recommendations were used to develop a scope of work for the amendment underway. We are aiming for March 1 for the first public hearing on the proposed revisions. The scope includes the addition of a neighborhood collector street, adding and revising projects costs for streets and bike/ped projects, updating functional classification map, updating the financially constrained project lists. The project anticipates additional public feedback via the city website in addition to the public hearing. Liburdy anticipates additional feedback from City Council after an upcoming work session.

Frost asked the scope of the March 1 PC meeting. Liburdy responded that previous hearings were focused on the Westside Area Concept Plan report. This hearing will be narrower in scope – focused on the TSP amendments. Liburdy hopes to provide drafts at least one week ahead of the hearing.

Nilsen added that public outreach includes a work session at City Council.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING:

FILE NO. 2020-37

PROPOSAL: Middle Housing Code Updates

APPLICANT: City of Hood River

STAFF REPORT: Nilsen shared a power point presentation. Nilsen recapped middle housing in general and Planning Commission's work on the issue in recent meetings. Draft proposed code includes 7 sections – definitions, purpose, applicability, relationship to other code, exceptions, land division, and

development standards. Nilsen clarified that the prototypes provided from consultants is not draft code – they are intended to help shape the code.

Commissioner Tina Lassen asked a question about the parameters and level of prescription. Nilsen explained the code will provide the sidebars or parameters as a working toolkit to design from. Illustrations aren't exhaustive to what is possible.

Nilsen provided an overview of the draft code sections. He explained the proposed definitions are needed to provide clear & objective standards. He explained that the applicability section is intended to make clear that the middle housing uses are subject to the standards of the new section and building permit – not land use review or other zone standards. For example, the proposed building height and floor area standards are unique to these housing types. If partition is proposed, it will need to be reviewed concurrently with a building permit. Nilsen described some aspects similar to PUD standards – such as CCRs.

Commissioner Irving asked a question about CCRs – are they applicable to all middle housing projects. Nilsen – if there are common elements, yes.

Nilsen continued with an overview of development standards. The cap on the number of units is related to how these applications will be reviewed – as ministerial permits not subject to public hearing or public notice. This code is intended to be applicable to small size developments, not large-scale. Irving asked a question about the typical base lot size; Nilsen explained it is information for discussion purposes.

Nilsen summarized the allowable middle housing types: two dwelling unit configurations, three dwelling unit configurations, cottage housing. Setbacks are generally the same as the underlying zone setbacks. Lot coverage is addressed in development tables. Some current land division standards are included in the draft middle housing code such as block length. The provisions include one on-site/off-street parking space in the side or rear and limit the width of driveways or curb cuts. The provisions also encourage low-impact development (LID); require 30 percent open space (Nilsen noted a discussion item is whether to allow inclusion of wetlands or steep slopes in open space); street tree and basic landscape requirements; dwelling unit size maximums; building height.

Irving asked a question about the building height examples. Nilsen said some of the examples are in the packet, some were added after preparation of the packet. Irving asked a clarifying question about differences between the proposed height provisions in this section from current code.

Nilsen continued his presentation summarizing required architectural elements; front porches

Commissioner Price suggested the trim requirement is outdated - contemporary architecture does not always include trim but can be done well.

Nilsen continued to explained the permitted obstructions section; fences;

Commissioner Ramey asked for an example of an existing home that could eligible for middle housing infill. Nilsen said the intent is to allow the opportunity even where there are larger existing homes – such as a long Belmont where there are smaller older homes on large lots.

Lassen asked if some elements reflect staff or Council input. Nilsen said some element are from PC discussion, some staff recommendation, some Council input, and some input from the development community.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Heather Staten, Thrive Hood River: Staten asked question about the development table and lot coverage. Nilsen explained in was in the December 21st packet. Staten provided a cautionary tale of making the code too cumbersome that developers don't built the desired units. She advocated taking the time and doing the analysis necessary to ensure middle housing units are constructed. The unit size might be problematic, the code is missing a 4-plex option. EcoNW could provide analysis. Marketability and ensuring the development types pencil out is important.

Mike Ketler, Integrity Building (IBC): Ketler echoed Staten's comments and suggested an incentive for builders to develop middle housing such as utility fees. And perhaps lot coverage.

Nancy Roach – 2 Eugene St. Roach referred to comments submitted by her husband Greg Crafts. She favors well-intended regulation but also supports a reality test and economic viability that was suggested by Staten and Ketler. Roach suggested that Crafts and Mike Kitts develop a test prototype.

Frost asked for additional testimony. There was none.

COMMISSION DELIBERATION:

Frost asked for specific points that need discussion. Items include environmentally restricted land in open space, dwelling unit size, and building height.

Irving asked that there is a complete packet for the next discussion with page numbers. He also summarized some of the issues he has comments about. Irving supported idea of counting wetlands or steep slopes in the open space. He said lot coverage is a continual challenge currently. Generally Irving supports a more general discussion on building height rather than inserting something new and that a consistent standard will be less confusing. On dwelling unit size, Irving is unclear on some of the standards but thinks a 600 s.f. footprint is not economically viable. Might want to consider whether we're serving owners or renters or both.

Lassen suggested input from all commissioners on open space first. Lassen agreed wetlands and steep slopes can be considered open space. She also questioned common open space in middle housing. Something has to give and she thinks people will prioritize private space version communal open space.

Nilsen said there is a 30% open space requirement but not a specific amount for communal open space. Lassen noted 100 s.f. for each unit of open space.

Irving asked how the access diagram addresses open space. Nilsen explained the open space standard applies to the whole site, not individual units.

Ramey favors requiring a minimum level of green space and not specifying whether it's common or not.

Commissioner Schlappi supports allowing wetlands as open space; she favors useful open space. She asked the purpose of the space? Is it for picnics or active recreation? Commissioner Price suggested

some of the purpose is to provide light and not to cover the entire lot. She agreed with the idea of not prescribing whether the open space is common. Frost agrees with including wetlands & steep slopes in open space and with not prescribing how it's used.

Irving summarized consensus about not prescribing common vs private open space; consensus for some kind of open space requirement. He suggested 30% is arbitrary and recommends further analysis. Nilsen said the prototypes all meet the 30% requirement; some provide more.

Lassen asked about a maximum area for driveways and parking. Nilsen said it's counted in lot coverage. Nilsen clarified some elements that count toward lot coverage but not toward open space. Irving suggested combining open space and lot coverage standards into one. Irving asked whether the open space would be restricted by easement or a plat. Price asked about how pervious and impervious surfaces factor into this. Irving suggested it will be challenging to enforce both over time.

Lassen suggested separating housing from parking/driveway; goal is to get more housing. Lassen prefers leaving parking to the market. Frost views this as the portions of lot that is built environment vs. natural or green. Price supports a lot coverage standard to ensure some portion of the site is not developed. Commissioners continued discussion about open space and lot coverage. Consensus was for simplification – regulate lot coverage or open space, not both (Bill advocated lot coverage, Lassen & Ramey & Price favored open space); and to allow for inclusion of wetlands/steep slopes in open space.

[7:39 p.m.] Commissioners moved onto discussion of unit sizes. Nilsen noted the size maximums with or without garages and the building height limit. He explained the relationship between building height and fire code. One goal is to achieve more (relatively) affordable units. Scalability, density, affordability are some factors in the size limits.

Ramey said she isn't concerned about height; she's concerned about affordability. Price added that the land cost is a big factor for affordability. Irving said it's an issue of supply & demand – we need to figure out how to put more units on each lot. Nilsen explained the provisions provide a 100% density increase in R-1; 50% increase in number of units in R-2 & R-3. Price suggested taller units on corner lots – in areas where fire access isn't an issue. Nilsen said mandated increased density on corner lots is common. Lassen agreed the economic question is more important than unit size specificity and agreed input from developers is important. Frost likes idea of more smaller size units and noted there are many appeal factors of smaller homes. Irving suggested incentives will be key. Lassen worries that these will become second homes. Ramey suggested we should consider inclusionary zoning with income restrictions. Frost noted that the PC can discuss the development standards; the Council can discuss policy questions such as inclusionary zoning. Nilsen asked whether there is interest in 1 unit/1,250 s.f. of site area in R-3 (instead of 1 per 1,500 s.f.)? There was general support. Irving suggested to get more units on a lot, we shouldn't lower the building height.

Nilsen asked about a ceiling on the size. Frost worries if there isn't a ceiling that we'll end up with maxed out units that are out of character with the surrounding neighborhood. Irving suggested consideration of a floor area ratio that increases with the number of units. There needs to be incentive to building smaller size units.

Nilsen said he'd work on some revisions and touch base with some developers. Lassen asked for explanation of why ADUs are not permitted. Nilsen explained these are small units – a smaller unit will

just count as another unit in these scenarios. Lassen doesn't want to curb ADUs unnecessarily. Several commissioners expressed support for allowing ADUs and wanted further discussion.

Irving asked for some clarification about process & next steps. Nilsen said the PC should continue the item to a date certain. Irving asked for an outline of issues to discuss next time and a summary of comments to date. Nilsen will bring back refinements.

MOTION: Commissioner Irving moved to continue the hearing on File No. 2020-37 to February 1, 2021. Commissioner Lassen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Schlappi moved to approve the minutes of January 4, 2021. Price seconded. Motion as amended passed unanimously.

V. ADJOURN

Frost adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.



6/19/2021

Mark Frost, Chair

Date



06/21/2021

Dustin Nilsen, Planning Director

Date (Approved)