

MINUTES

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Mark Frost (chair), Sue Powers, Erika Price (by phone), Bill Irving, Amy Schlappi, Megan Ramey

ABSENT: Tina Lassen

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

II. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S UPDATE:

We will discuss a TSP amendment in March (March 1 & 15) and we will have some quasi-judicial applications in April.

III. PUBLIC HEARING:

FILE NO. 2020-37

PROPOSAL: Middle Housing Code Updates

APPLICANT: City of Hood River

STAFF REPORT:

Chair Frost asked for suggestions for sequencing the discussion of highlights and changes in the draft code document. Commissioner Irving suggested discussing it section by section.

Director Nilsen shared the draft code document and started discussion with a couple definitions. He highlighted definitions for building height,

Chair Frost asked a question about building height and whether both the height and the methodology should mirror the rest of the city. Irving expressed interest in revising the building height definition ASAP separately and implementing it city-wide. Nilsen explained that the Council workplan includes auditing the zoning code but not looking at building height definition on its own. Commissioners asked about pros & cons of changing it for Missing Middle Housing ahead of looking at it city-wide. Irving suggested avoiding having the same definition in more than one section of the code. Option – A. keep same as rest of city; or Option B. allow 28' height but use new methodology to calculate the height (add back "Section K" diagram). Powers, Schlappi, Price said Option B; Ramey said keep it less confusing – Option A. Irving expressed interest in discussing the issue separately because there's more to it. Frost expressed concern that they wouldn't be able to update the building height definition soon. Consensus: leave methodology as is; but advocate for revisiting it sooner rather than later.

(~6:05) Commissioners discussed the cottage cluster definition. Irving said he thought it was eliminated. Nilsen explained the provisions differentiate cottage development from multi-family – when

there are four or more units in a development. Irving asked questions about unit sizes and floor area ratio and noted that 2 story cottages are encouraged by current language. Commissioner Powers recalled earlier versions for cottage clusters that was dismissed in previous conversations. Nilsen suggested that the cottage cluster is most applicable in the R-1 zone. Irving suggested defining “cottage” with a size limit. Frost likes limiting size and one or 1.5 stories, such as City of Portland. Frost and Irving suggested size limit of 1,000 square feet. Ramey asked why 1,000 vs 900 s.f. Powers agreed a cap of 1,000 sf. Consensus: cottage floor area not more than 1,000 s.f.

Irving asked a question in the Floor Area definition about “occupiable” and “regardless of finish.” Nilsen explained the definition comes from the building code and that an unfinished basement would count. Irving asked if “occupiable” could be defined. Nilsen said any space taller than 6’8” is considered occupiable. Irving wants to avoid including space that will never be used – e.g. area in crawl space on a sloped lot that is more than 6’8” tall. Nilsen agreed to clarify (conditioned/climate controlled).

Nilsen summarized a new definition of landscape that is included. And definition of middle housing. Revise to include “cottage” in middle housing list.

Nilsen described updates to the CC&Rs section. Irving asked to change common ownership agreement to common maintenance agreement. Commissioners agreed. Schlappi asked if the definition should reference total floor area vs total square foot area. Nilsen explained the distinction.

Nilsen said he updated a comparison chart/matrix. Irving asked about size limit per unit vs. average size. Nilsen said part of the matrix articulates maximum number of units per building site.

Four Dwelling Unit configuration – Ramey had a question about Thrive’s recommendation. Nilsen said draft includes 4-unit structures.

Parking – Nilsen added language about rounding. Ramey asked if any portions of downtown would benefit from middle housing code. Nilsen said there is some C-1 downtown. Ramey asked about exempting parking downtown. Nilsen said the downtown district is eligible for fee in lieu. Ramey said paying \$3,000 for a parking space makes a development unaffordable. Powers said the fee in lieu reduction was significant (\$20k to \$3k). Consensus: don’t exempt downtown.

Irving asked about 50% parking in front yard. Nilsen added language for conversions of existing structures. Option A – allow none in front setback Option B – allow 50% or one parking in front. Powers: 50% ok in front; Price agreed; Schlappi concerned w/20’ driveway in front; Ramey asked re: parallel parking in front. Nilsen clarified driveway access can be in front, but parking space itself in back. Frost is torn but because you have more units, prefers to encourage parking in back. Ramey asked about streets without sidewalk – allowing 2 parallel spots. Such as A Street, B Street. Nilsen said those streets are intended to have sidewalks eventually; parallel parking is not permitted in street sections. Irving suggested perpendicular parking in front setback. Options: A) one space; B) 50%; C) None. Ramey wants parking grouped near street; doesn’t support having parking in both front & back – worst case. Irving: 50% but limit curb cut (e.g. head-in parking). Powers ok w/50% in front with limitations on curb cut; Price & Irving agreed. Irving alternative – 50% or max 2 spaces. Powers advocated flexibility. Frost asked if other provisions affect location of structure in relation to street. Nilsen said this provision is intended to push units closer to the street. Allowing one space in the front is no different from current development standards. Irving recommended either A) 14’ driveway width + max one space in front setback; B) no parking in front setback. Irving = A; Price – tie the number allowed in front to

frontage or lot size. New Irving Proposal: 50% in front setback but not exceed 36% of frontage. Ramey – let developer figure it out, more flexibility, especially on streets without sidewalks. Powers – leaning toward parking in back. If allow some in front, we won't get more open space. Frost leans toward engaging the street with structures – keep as is (no parking in front).

A= Irving, Price, Ramey

B = Frost, Powers, Schlappi

Express split PC views on allowing parking in front vs. prescribing all in back.

What's left: FAR; conversion of an existing SFD. PC ok to continue to 8:00

(~7:34) Floor Area Ratio – Nilsen shared a screen with information from the Portland Infill Project. Hood River current dwelling size affected by lot coverage, setbacks, height. Irving asked how do we incentivize different sizes in multiple units; and how does our approach it? Nilsen said if you build more units, you get smaller units. It allows mixing and matching unit sizes to fit site. Portland dials back the FAR for a single-family and allow more FAR when more units. We haven't said we'll dial back FAR for current allowed uses (SFDs, etc). All of Hood River existing FAR equivalents are greater than Portland.

Public Comment –

Nancy Roach: appreciate the work tonight and thoughtful consideration. You have feedback from local developers. Keep in mind they need to make a profit. There are developers who will push every item to max it out. Parking is no win – everyone will complain.

PC Discussion resumed:

Nilsen shared a spreadsheet estimating Hood River existing FAR. Nilsen estimates using FAR will take down the building size. Right direction for compatibility (reduced scale); marketability – takes out a big bite. Powers asked what drove the Portland projection. Nilsen: a desire to reduce sizes of SFD and incentivize more dwelling units. Nilsen – we aren't scaling back what is permissible now. Powers – if we used FAR, we might have more probability of more units? Nilsen – only if you disincentivize a SFD. Ramey – what's wrong with that? Nilsen – it's a policy choice.

Irving wants to incentivize more smaller units. Wants to add back cottage in the matrix. Nilsen walked through sections of the matrix to describe current proposal vs. current code.

Irving – 1) do we allow a mix of big and small and 2) how do we deal with scenario of falling short by 500 s.f.

Nilsen – if do a mix of sizes, depends on site size.

Irving – what about a 7,000 s.f. site in R-1; 500 s.f. short of ability to do 3 units? Nilsen – Council ok w/2 units in R-1 (similar to current SFD + ADU). Allowing a 3rd unit would be a bigger jump.

(~8:03 p.m.) Frost summarized the proposed code is similar to using FAR. Nilsen said we have a little more sidebars to use size of lot or site as a driver or sidebars. And we aren't discounting existing SFD standards. Frost's concern about the chart – when add more dwellings it gets more dense; and that landscaping is basically what's left in setbacks.

Nilsen said the alternate % on landscaping is to consider whether you want more landscaping that essentially the setback areas. Irving – comfortable with proposed alternate % for landscaping, some additional green space in R-1 & R-2; Other commissioners agreed.

Consensus re: graduated number of units by site size is ok.

Irving – is plan to try to test fit this? Nilsen – plan is to get a recommendation to Council. Frost would like to see what some of these look like on a 5,000 s.f. lot.

Irving – what is timeframe for next steps? Nilsen – will craft this into a recommendation for Council for the March 8 meeting. Could we have another hearing on the final draft? Nilsen – Council will have the hearing, not PC. Irving – would be nice to test the waters in the development community before giving it to Council.

Nilsen – agree with benefit of test fitting but at some point we have to go with a recommendation. We’ve responded to many of the comments received. Can’t ask for too many test fits.

Irving wants some specific economics to go with a recommendation to Council. Frost worries about the economics and whether we’ll have any level of affordability. Nilsen – anything will sell; it’s only more affordable by way of size; it’s a market-driven product.

Nilsen will share the recommendation with the PC as advisory.

MOTION: Commissioner Irving moved to recommend File No. 2020-37 Missing Middle code set as amended during deliberations to Council. Ramey seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Ramey moved to approve the minutes from February 1, 2021 as presented. Powers seconded. There was no further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

V. ADJOURN

Frost adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Mark Frost, Chair Date

Dustin Nilsen, Planning Director Date (Approved)