



CITY OF TUKWILA PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) MINUTES

Date: May 22, 2025
Time: 6:30 p.m.
Location: Hybrid Meeting - via Microsoft Teams / Public, In-Person
Attendance, Council Chambers, 6200 Southcenter Blvd., Tukwila,
WA 98188

I. **Call to Order**

Chair Durant called the Tukwila PC meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. **Roll Call**

The PC Secretary took roll call.

Present: Chair Ann Durant; Vice Chair Alex Kaehler; Commissioners Louise Strander, Martin Probst, Richard McLeland Wieser, Jane Ho, and Jacob Halverson.

Staff: Mayor Thomas McLeod, Department of Community Development (DCD); Director Nora Gierloff, American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP); Emily Romanenko, Deputy City Attorney; Senior Planner Isaac Gloor, DCD; Economic Development Administrator Derek Speck, and Planning Commission Secretary Wynetta Bivens

III. **Amendment of the Agenda**

No changes to the agenda were requested.

IV. **Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner McLeland Wieser moved to adopt the 5/22/25 minutes. Commissioner Ho seconded the motion. The motion carried.

V. **Written General Public Comments**

No submittals.

VI. **Old Business**

None

VII. **New Business**

1. PC Procedures Refresher (Emily Romanenko, Deputy City Attorney)

Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) - An overview was provided of governmental actions, and the intent of delegating authorities, legislative declaration, and rules. The following are some takeaways:

- It is necessary to determine when the PC is required to have a quorum of a minimum of four PC present to act on official business.
- Is there an inadvertent serial meeting occurring? A serial meeting may occur when a majority of four PC communicate outside of a meeting via phone or email.
- Passive receipt of information is fine. The PC is not discussing or making a decision.
- The PC should have conversations about City business when they are in a meeting that has been properly noticed.
- The PC should contact staff or the City Attorney if they have questions.
- One-way email communication is allowed, but it was suggested that emails are Bcc'd to recipients so there are no responses to communication between the PC.
- Information was provided regarding open meetings via social media. PC shall not speak on the behalf of other PC.
- Protocol was provided and discussed on public comments, which is required in any meeting when a vote is taken on final actions. It is important and strongly recommended that the PC does not ask questions when individuals are giving public comments during a public hearing.
- There may be penalties for non-compliance. This may include personal liability, public agency liability, improper actions in violation may be voided and potentially grounds for recalls.
- When public comments are given, PC are to make sure you are in listening/hearing mode.

Public Records Act (PRA) - The PRA is a strongly worded mandate for broad disclosure of public records, and it requires strict compliance. Agencies must disclose all public records. The following are some takeaways:

- A Public Records Officer must be appointed; this individual resides in the City Clerk's Office.
- Records are considered, prepared, owned, used, or retained by a state or local agency.
- If City business is conducted on personal devices, they are subject to disclosure.
- There are no general privacy exemptions in the PRA.
- Packet information are secondary copies and PC do not need to keep them. Staff retain public records.
- Do not mix business and personal records.

Appearance of Fairness - Legal standards for making decisions. The following are some takeaways:

- The PC no longer sits in the quasi-judicial capacity and appearance of fairness does not apply in the legislature capacity.

- When voting on code amendments PC are setting direction and policy and there are limited safeguards needed because there is a fair amount of discretion.
2. Tukwila International Boulevard (TIB) Neighborhood: Introduction, History, and Future (Isaac Gloor, Senior Planner)

Background Overview

Senior Planner Isaac Gloor provided background on the potential modifications to the development standards within the zoning district associated with the TIB neighborhood. He said that staff have been working on this for a long time and provided an overview of the work already done on zoning code amendments and how that work may guide their future decisions. He said that the TIB neighborhood or corridor are referred to as different things sometimes in different code or documents and it pertains to all the parcels in a particular area. The area contains the City's sole Link station, which provides connections to Seattle, Snohomish County, the airport, points south in the future, and to the eastside across Lake Washington. It has two bus rapid transit lines serviced by other King County routes that provide access to Renton, Burien, and Federal Way but despite the strong investment in transit in the area, it is still mostly low-density, auto-oriented neighborhoods. Development of property has not been quick and has generally required labor intensive development agreements, which are one-off deals that are not predictable or transparent.

There have been 30 years of planning for TIB starting in 1995 and continuing in 2015, TIB got its own subarea Element within the Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan). One of the goals for the 2024 Comp Plan that was recently adopted was that "The TIB District is a thriving, walkable, well-rounded neighborhood and a desirable place to live, work, shop, worship, or play." There was lots of community outreach pertaining to this goal.

In an effort to implement the goal, in 2017 the City contracted with Congress for New Urbanism (CNU), and the CNU gave their recommendations to the City Council (CC) regarding what the City should do. The recommendation included physical changes to the streetscapes and changes to the zoning code, which would allow greater capacity and greater development, and greater diversity of uses and development patterns that are more consistent with the recommendations. The CC established a moratorium on certain auto-oriented uses. There was much work done by staff and consultants in the three years following. The CC decided not to make any zoning changes until a decision was made regarding the final shape of the road itself. In March 2020, in part due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided that this question would be reviewed later. Because a clear timeframe was not established, the topic was dropped.

This meeting is primarily to discuss the development standards for what happens on private property. In 2017, the CC adopted measures that would align with the CNU recommendations on an interim capacity. They established an immediate moratorium on auto-oriented uses, which were deemed incompatible, such as hotels, motels, gas stations, etc. That effort remains the only outcome of the work done from 2017-2020 that was implemented. None of the concepts produced in 2017 for zoning changes were adopted.

Commissioner McLeland Wieser asked staff and Mayor McLeod, who had joined the discussion, where the bottleneck is and why this work is taking so long. Mayor McLeod said that this CC currently wants to do something. And there were members of the past CC that wanted to do something, but the CC could not come to a consensus and the community didn't want it. There were various challenges. He said that he has always been in favor of this, and the charette program done in 2017 was a great idea and he doesn't know why the administration at the time wasn't trying to push it forward more. He said when he was on CC that they pushed for the addition of flashing crosswalks, which were put in around 142nd and 41st Street, but it wasn't enough. He said this is long overdue and that is the reason it's come back to the PC. When asked what the PC could do, he said PC could consider making a recommendation to the CC. He encouraged the PC to have robust conversation. Commissioner McLeland Wieser also asked if PC could advise the CC to move faster on this. Staff said that first the PC needs to determine what they want to move faster on. Mayor McLeod said he has asked the CC and staff to get this done by the end of November. Director Gierloff said that ideally, they would be moving on the PC recommendation stating what changes they think should be made to the code and in what ways. Then PC would forward their recommendation to the CC for their review. Commissioner Ho said what PC should do is figure out what their priority is, focus on it and have a discussion.

The following are Comments, Recommendations, Questions, and/or Requests Raised during discussion:

(Further discussion and responses are available in the [video](#) of the meeting.)

- PC requested documentation from 2017 on the opinion of the community and the PC.
- Commissioner Kaehler said they can save some time with existing information and can get up to speed on some things without reinventing the wheel – and that scope is really going to be key. Knowing what is in their scope and what is not in their scope is part of going fast. Hopefully, staff can provide gentle and kind guidance to keep PC within a reasonable scope. Also, the November timeline sounds achievable, reasonable and fast. He feels that this is one of the most important things he has seen in recent PC history. He said he is looking forward to taking it seriously and pushing.
- Commissioner McLeland Wieser said it is not in the best interest of the City to keep “kicking this can down the road”. Isaac said he appreciated the scope comment because the topic could snowball into an enormous conversation about every zoning district within the whole City. Trying to stay on target to the specific things they are talking about that they can have the most impact on in a short time would be very helpful. Commissioner Strander requested that staff provide comparisons of what is in the code/re-channelization/municipal code.
- Commissioner Durant requested staff to provide case study information on the code amendment process, how to engage with consultants to help understand the potential and explain information on Bothell case studies.
- Commissioner Halverson said that he would really like to see the zoning modified; at least on the south side of TIB to more multi-family, whether it is single use or multi-family use. He said allowing someone to build a giant apartment building would probably be important on the McDonald site because it is a very challenging site, and it is very expensive. It's tricky developing on a major arterial and amending the code would allow

development.

- Commissioner Probst said it would be great to look at some examples of mixed and single-use development from other cities that have been successful in implementation. Then determine whether Tukwila must amend the code to make it feasible and make sure it fits with the division of the community. He said the part that he is missing is what the community said previously and what do they want now, since the light rail is there. He said that he really would like to dive into that and envision with PC and CC how they can make it a living, thriving, walkable space for everyone. He said there is a captive audience coming off the light rail during the day. It's such a wonderful place to potentially succeed and have the community live in a space that is beautiful and fun, and he is excited about it. Isaac said the current standards do not allow a lot of flexibility. It's a very specific and strict standard, as to how they can build in a lot more flexibility whether it is mixed or single use while still achieving those goals and allowing development where people will build.
- Commissioner Durant said that issues at that end by the light rail have been security, concerns about parking and parking garages. The diversity of uses in activating that end of TIB is going to be essential to have that kind of all-day engagement from coffee shops to midday, into some sort of evening activities, so that it feels like a vibrant place where people are always engaged. It will be interesting to see how it can be achieved or how other cities are achieving that. She said that she would love to see more third spaces (place where social connections can be made other than home or work). She said we need to have great places along TIB.
- Commissioner McLeland Wieser asked if one person could spearhead this and guide it. The Mayor suggested that the PC review the charrette study that was completed in 2017, which provided a lot of community input, and he thinks it's a good study that would still be relevant. He said, maybe that can be sent out and PC can start digging into it and make the most of their time between now and their next meeting. He said he would like to see the CC vote on this in November and that he thinks that Director Gierloff noted it well, when she said that they were trying to do so much. He said that it almost became paralyzing and then COVID happened.
- Director Gierloff said that next month staff can bring PC a draft code of things to change and why.
- Commissioner Ho suggested prioritizing safety for the people in the community especially when they are walking to stores or businesses. She asked what the protocols are for potentially reducing the speed limit if a crosswalk cannot be put in for now until finances can be figured out. She said if they can get that started it would show the community that they are actively trying to make a change. Isaac said that DCD does not have the authority to regulate aspects of the road itself but can require developers to install improvements along their frontages or incentivize the installation of safe infrastructure. Commissioner Kaehler said the PC will have to do their part with the highest quality of code update within their purview and trust that Public Works will do their part in the re-channelization and creating safe streets.
- Isaac said another type of street improvement that they can consider requiring along frontages are pedestrian-protecting bollards.
- Commissioner Durant said because they are running parallel, if PC could have updates or

reports as it will inform them that the densities PC are proposing stay at maybe the south end to the village. It will also help with understanding what the current conversation is and the trajectory of those conversations in formulating the PC recommendations. Commissioner Ho was in consensus, she said it would keep them on task.

- Commissioner Halverson asked staff to provide PC with a recommendation for removing some of the overlays. He suggested the first step could be to review the residential commercial (RC) component and review the three zones one at a time. Then recommendations could be forwarded to CC, because it seems like easy improvements to make to promote development. Further, allowing multi-family projects next to the light rail would be beneficial and that seems to be in line with a walkable city. He said a big development like that would create revenue for improvements. Director Gierloff said traffic impact fees can go towards the public improvements. Commissioner Halverson mentioned a potential opportunity on the west side of the school on 42nd, which is a secondary road or arterial road.
- Commissioner Durrant said as part of the requirements for the Comp Plan update, Tukwila was targeted for increasing housing due to being behind on housing construction. The City should allow TIB to serve this community and future residents and not be afraid to have those conversations. Isaac said the goals and policies of the Comp Plan are very supportive of TIB being more of a main street for the area, and that it's not Tukwila's function to provide a mechanism to get to other places easier, but instead to help achieve the City's goals and visions.
- Director Gierloff suggested that the PC provide staff with some feedback on what they would like for them to incentivize. She said that they do not want to overburden development by adding a lot of requirements that may not work. For instance, ground floor retail can work well, but if you make everyone do it, it dilutes and may not be successful. If there is something PC want to incentivize in a place where it would work, you give a little something to make the developers want to do the extra work. Maybe there could be an incentive offered if developers build two- or three-bedroom units. Staff asked if there were things they would like staff to build into the code to sweeten the pot.
- Commissioner McLeland Wieser asked if the City was trying to please all the people all the time. He said it seems like they want to make everybody happy, but that's not going to happen. Decisions need to be made and move forward.
- Commissioner Kaehler said changes can be made that move away from expensive auto-oriented uses to fiscally responsible land use and uses of the space. Not everything has to be about throwing money into the problem, it could be a smart investment to save money.
- Commissioner McLeland Wieser asked if staff already have plans and whether there are recommendations. Director Gierloff said what they are trying to bring before the PC is code. They don't want to redo their vision but what they want to do is determine setbacks and height requirements. The issue with the recommendations from years ago is that the building codes changed and the state regulations around transit have changed, so it will not do them any good to try and adopt those. Staff will consolidate what they have been working on with the PC feedback and start bringing partial draft code to the PC for their review. Once review is completed a recommendation with specific development standards can be forwarded to the CC for their review and adoption.
- Commissioner Halverson made the following additional comments regarding the overlay.

He asked if they could zone everything high density and suggested doing a charette next time they are working on code amendments. Isaac said that the good news is that the Comp Plan already includes all the things that Commissioner Halverson is interested in, and it is the Zoning Code that is out of sync. He said they can change the underlying standards for the zoning district without needing to make any broad policy changes again.

- Commissioner Durant requested that staff allow the PC a month to review the past work that has been done before they decide what to adopt. She said it's such an incredible opportunity to bring the code into alignment with the Comp Plan. Commissioner Halverson was in consensus and suggested making the next meeting a study session. Staff said that this is a priority and agreed to hold a review work session in June. Staff said that the PC homework is to review the actual documents in preparation for the June PC meeting and they will really dive into the development standards at the July meeting. Commissioner McLeland Wieser said that DCD staff are experts and that he relies on them. He would like staff to provide the PC with a proposal that the PC can decide on. Director Gierloff said that there have been a lot of studies, proposals and plans that are distilled in the Comp Plan Update that PC has worked on and spent time thinking about. She suggested that PC could look at some pictures of Bothell and some excerpts of their code and see what they built. Commissioner Probst said that he was interested in the idea to review the past code, but he had some reservations. He inquired about the use of a development agreement, which staff said could involve a lot of risk and cost and potentially get to the final stage only to be denied. Commissioner Kaehler encouraged staff to move at a rigorous pace due to the lack of progress so far, saying he thinks they owe it to the community to move fast. Staff said if they stay targeted this could be a manageable project this year.
- There was an inquiry regarding low density commercial to create uses for more small restaurants, staff said it would be possible to incentivize such spaces.

Next Steps:

- Staff will provide PC with some case studies.
- The PC will be provided with in-depth details about past work.
- Staff will continue to work on the code.
- Review of development standard proposals for the Regional Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial Center zoning districts in July.

VIII. Director's Report

None.

IX. Adjournment

Commissioner Ho moved to adjourn, and Commissioner McLeland Wieser seconded the motion.

Adjourned at: 8:32 p.m.

Submitted by: Wynetta Bivens, PC Secretary