

**CITY OF COOS BAY  
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES  
Tuesday, January 14, 2014 at 6:00 P.M.  
Coos Bay City Hall, 500 Central Avenue, Coos Bay**

**ATTENDANCE**

**COMMISSIONERS:** Chairman Chris Hood, Commissioners Jim Berg, Christine Coles, Bruce Harlan, Phil Marler, and Rex Miller

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Jeff Marineau

**STAFF:** Eric Day, Director of Community Development  
Aaron Harris, Planner 1

**SIGNED-IN GUESTS:** None

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**CCI/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mayor Crystal Shoji commented on design review standards. The mayor stated that the council is having trouble coming to agreement on standards, even on a general direction. There are differences of opinion regarding whether standards should be strict or if strict standards will hamper business. The Mayor stated she thinks standards should be loosened up. She mentioned there will be an upcoming work session for the City Council.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of the Planning Commission minutes of December 10, 2013.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Coles - Approve the Planning Commission minutes of December 2013 as submitted.

**SECOND:** Commissioner Marler

**VOTE:** Unanimous

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

Discussion regarding proposed revised responsibilities of the Design Review Committee. Director Day stated that the Mayor asked staff to meet with the Rules Committee a few months ago. Director Day and the City Manager have been meeting with Rules Committee for the past couple months for a revised list of duties for what is currently the Design Review Committee (DRC). The proposed changes include a name change and their design review role. Last week Director Day met with the Mayor and the DRC. The next step is to take the proposed changes to the City Council.

Director Day stated that, instead of meeting on a few certain types of applications and passing along input to Planning Commission, the DRC would instead meet on a larger variety of land use applications, including any type of application that would require a pre-application and a public hearing. The DRC's input would be included in application notes along with their recommendations to the Planning Commission.

Chairman Hood stated that the DRC was established specifically for the purpose of design review. The Chairman asked what kind of input the DRC could provide on a subdivision application, when their expertise is architectural design. Director Day responded with a two-part answer. First, the committee's duties have grown. Second, we have made the specialties on the committee more general and broad.

Commissioner Berg stated that before they were known as the DRC they were the Historical Design Review Committee. He asks what the genesis is for the proposed changes. Director Day stated that the Mayor may be better to answer this question.

The Mayor stated that the DRC is too good a thing to waste on one issue. The DRC has been used for façade improvement, the 2<sup>nd</sup> court alley, other issues related to design, city layout, and public spaces. The Mayor stated that we feel they are very creative and useful, but their input but does not need to be part of quasi-judicial record. The Mayor stated that we thought it would make for a smoother process. It would expand knowledge and ability to help citizens. The Mayor added that we want to limit the number of people on the committee that are outside city limits because we do not think it is appropriate to have a majority who are not tax payers or business owners in the city.

Commissioner Harlan asked what the end result of the revised DRC role is when one, two, or however many committee members are choosing to show up at pre-application conferences. The Mayor responded that it could be a wonderful opportunity. Commissioner Harlan asked if they would, in turn, be coming to the Planning Commission. The Mayor responded that they would only come to pre-application conferences. They would not be part of the quasi-judicial record.

The Mayor, Chairman, and Commissioner Coles discussed the DRC's role in the quasi-judicial process.

Director Day stated that the important point was that the DRC would still have the same ability to make recommendations to PC, but on a wider range of issues.

Chairman Hood stated that pre-application meetings cover a wide range of issues and do not focus on design review. DRC members attending pre-application conferences would not be meeting to specifically address architecture-related issues. He said he always recommends using the expertise of our people, but would hate seeing them removed from their role from the two design review areas in our community.

Commissioner Coles stated her agreement and added that the new proposal doesn't seem as tight as previously written. Further, these are some of the most talented people in our community and she does not want to lose their expertise.

The Mayor, Chairman, and Commissioner Coles discussed joint meetings between the Planning Commission and City Council.

Director Day stated that he is not currently looking for a recommendation, but comments the Commission would like carried forward to City Council as they deliberate the proposal. Commissioner Coles requested a few more days to review the information and to email comments. Day Director stated that would be fine. Commissioner Berg requested to discuss the pros and cons to identify the issue.

Chairman Hood stated that, in his perspective, the change was changing how we make decisions in Empire District. The proposed changes appear to remove the DRC because they no longer have time to spend with applicants. He stated that he has always valued the DRC's input and that he does not have a problem with the theory, but the changes undermine the practical process.

Director Day stated that his interpretation would be nowhere near that. The changes allow the DRC to make comments as they always have. Chairman Hood then asked why we are making changes. Director Day stated the changes allow them to weigh in on a wider variety of issues and participate earlier in the process.

Hilary Baker stated she has no objection to the proposed change. She stated that involving the DRC in pre-application conferences would be excellent. Up until the last few years, people would get upset because money has already been spent on plans. The DRCs input at later stages can require plan revisions.

Commissioner Berg stated that pre-applications are quite expensive and not all land use applications would include a pre-application. Director Day responded that all SPARs (Site Plan and Architectural Review) now require a pre-application.

Commissioner Berg clarified that he was referring to small changes and not issues regarding SPARs.

Director Day responded that the Director can schedule a design review meeting at any time.

Chairman Hood questioned how the DRC can comment on an application that has not yet been submitted. They will be dealing with hypothetical issues. Who would then determine they were in compliance. Director Day responded that it is a chicken and the egg scenario. If design's at 15% or 30% completion, folks are not tied down to their designs. Chairman Hood stated that the Planning Commission is then left with the responsibility of making the determination on 75 percent of the design review issues. Director Day responded that maybe we should look at amending the code if there's that much grey area.

Chairman Hood made a comparison and noted that the Planning Commission using the DRC for direction on design is similar to staff using an outside consultant for issues where they need professional input.

Hilary Baker stated that she hopes the membership criteria would be broader as there are people like herself, that are invested in community but do not live in the city limits, that would like to participate.

Chairman Berg questioned why we are restricting DRC membership. The Mayor, Chairman, Commissioner Coles, and Commissioner Berg continued discussing the merits of restricting DRC membership to Coos Bay citizens and business owners.

Chairman Hood stated that when we start looking at making changes it's often because of failure. We should take into consideration the successes we've had using this process. We've seen considerable success in the Empire area. He stated that in the context of the Hollering Place development proposal it's important that we hold fast for the time being. He added he likes the current process and that he thinks it has been successful

Director Day stated that he will pass along the Commission's DRC comments.

Commissioner Coles noted that she brought information regarding the Astoria, Oregon Design Review Committee. She said Design Review Committees are rather common.

### **COMMISSION COMMENTS**

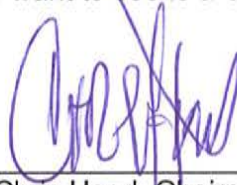
Commissioner Coles commented that the "Parks Comprehensive Master Plan" is complete. They intend to hold two town hall meetings in the near future to present the plan to the public.

**STAFF COMMENTS**

Director Day commented on the Webster text amendment. He stated that staff had recommended denial, Planning Commission recommended approval, and City Council voted unanimously against the proposed ordinance.

Director Day commented on upcoming development code amendments. He said the process was initiated months earlier but was put on hold. He said staff wrote a grant, and were the only south coast applicant to be awarded the grant this year. Director Day noted that staff is not sure how the \$20,000 grant will be used. The plan going forward, likely in April following the Ocean Grove application, would be to begin putting development code issues on the Planning Commission agenda monthly. Staff is planning to work with the Planning Commission for about six months, hold work sessions, make recommendations and then take the entire package to the City Council. The City Council would likely hold work sessions and a public meeting, then adopt the changes. Director Day stated that what we want to see is a Code that works better.

**ADJOURNMENT** 6:55 p.m.



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Chris Hood, Chairman  
City of Coos Bay  
Coos County, Oregon



ATTEST:

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Aaron Harris, Planner, City of Coos Bay

**APPROVED AS SUBMITTED FEBRUARY 11, 2014**