

APPROVED

CITY OF BREMERTON

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING November 21, 2022

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Tift called the regular meeting of the Bremerton Planning Commission to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present

Chair Tift
Vice Chair Rich
Commissioner Coviello
Commissioner Flemister
Commissioner Mosiman
Commissioner Wofford

Staff Present

Garrett Jackson, Planning Manager, Department of Community Development
Kate Millward, Planner, Department of Community Development
Christina Raine, Project Assistant, Department of Community Development

Commissioners Excused

Commissioner Pedersen

Quorum Confirmed

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

COMMISSIONER WOFFORD MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER TIFT TO SERVE AS CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION IN 2023. COMMISSIONER COVIELLO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

COMMISSIONER WOFFORD MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER RICH TO SERVE AS VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION IN 2023. COMMISSIONER FLEMISTER SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COMMISSIONER WOFFORD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 17, 2022, AS SUBMITTED. COMMISSIONER MOSIMAN SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

CHAIR CALL FOR MODIFICATIONS TO AGENDA

The agenda was accepted as presented.

PUBLIC MEETING

Call to the Public (public comments on any item not on the agenda)

Chair Tift invited comments from citizens.

Jim Kline, Interim Vice President, Callow-Charleston Business Association, thanked Mr. Jackson for the presentation he gave at the Association's last meeting. He did an outstanding job helping to lay the groundwork for the Association's involvement in developing the Callow area. In the year he has been involved in the organization, every contact he has had with the City has ended in great results. He also thanked the Planning Commissioners for the work they have put into the redevelopment plan for the Callow-Charleston Business Area. He specifically thanked Commissioner Flemister for helping bring the group of merchants and owners together, adding that they are starting to see things happen in the area.

Workshop: Economic Development Chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan for the 2024 Update

Mr. Jackson advised that, at this workshop, staff will provide an overview of the existing Economic Development Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Following the presentation, the public and Commissioners will be invited to provide feedback on how the chapter can be updated and improved. He reviewed that the current vision in the Economic Development Chapter reads as follows: *"As the only Metropolitan City within Kitsap County, Bremerton expects to substantially expand employment and job variety over the next 20 years to support a growing economy and lifestyle diversity within the region."*

Mr. Jackson explained that "Metropolitan City" is a defined term of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), and there are only five designated metropolitan cities within the entire group (Bellevue, Bremerton, Everett, Seattle and Tacoma). He provided a graph from the PSRC's Vision 2050, which illustrates the amount of growth these five cities are expected to absorb, noting that Kitsap County has a much smaller expectation than the other four counties that make up the PSRC. He advised that, as each element of the Comprehensive Plan is updated, the focus will be on the population and job growth targets. It is very important that the public understands that they are expecting the City to grow to nearly 64,000 residents by 2044, which is an increase of more than 30% over the current population. Additionally, the City is expected to absorb over 58,000 jobs by 2044, which is an increase of about 25%.

Mr. Jackson advised that the current Economic Development Chapter identifies the following five goals:

- **Goal 1 – Support expansion of commerce by diversifying and expanding Bremerton's commercial base.** Most recently, a show of support would be development of the Amazon site in the Puget Sound Industrial Center (PSIC) that provides over 200 new jobs. Additional development is on the horizon in the PSIC, including Event Tech, which is a maritime industry facility greater than 58,000 square feet, and The Circuit of the Northwest, which is an Entertainment Venue that is planned for races, music, etc.
- **Goal 2 – Revitalize Bremerton's commercial districts by upgrading and enhancing the aesthetic quality of existing buildings and street frontages.** A great example that has occurred since the plan was updated in 2016 is the redevelopment of Wheaton Way. The former Lowe's building has been redeveloped and is fully occupied with government services and office jobs. Other future development on the Wheaton Way Corridor includes a subdivision and tenant space.
- **Goal 3 – Facilitate physical improvements to commercial districts through tax incentives, intergovernmental programs, and private/public partnerships.** The most pronounced example would be the City's multifamily tax exemption (MFTE) Program, which has brought about the development of hundreds of multifamily and single-family residential units on the Wheaton Way Corridor. In addition, they are expecting the Marina Square Project to open for occupancy soon. These projects are all participating in the MFTE Program. The City also continues to be an economic supporter of the Quincy Square Project, both through applied grants and direct assistance.
- **Goal 4 – Recognize the relationship between transportation and economic development by working collaboratively with other governmental agencies to improve multi-modal transportation options and routes.** The fast-ferry expansion continues to progress, with an all-electric option being studied. The Navy is a key player in the City's transportation system. The Navy and City are moving forward with a \$750,000 transportation study, and the results are expected later next year. He commended Kitsap Transit, the purveyor of the fast-ferry system, as well as the extensive bus system.

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- **Goal 5 – Advance efforts to establish a regional perception of Bremerton as a welcoming, attractive and business-friendly city.** The City accomplishes this through the work of the individual City departments, Greater Kitsap Chamber of Commerce, Manette Business Association, Downtown Business Association, Charleston Business District, etc.

Mr. Jackson shared an overview of some economic data for the City of Bremerton from the American Community Survey done by the United States Census Bureau. Since the last time the data was collected for the Comprehensive Plan, there has been some pretty drastic shifts:

- The number of families making less than \$50,000 a year has decreased as a segment of the population, and the number of families making more than \$150,000 has more than doubled. This points to gentrification that is occurring in the City.
- About 25% of Bremerton residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, and the employment rate is approximately 48%.
- The population without health insurance is about 7%.
- Management, business, science and art occupations increased, while all other occupations decreased or were somewhat stagnant.
- There has been a 6% increase in people walking to work, and about a 3% increase in people working from home. There has been a steep increase in home occupation permits, with approximately 200 finalized already in 2022. All other modes of transportation fluctuated a little less.

Mr. Jackson referred to the PSRC’s Opportunity Index, which measures education, economic health, housing and neighborhood quality, mobility and transportation, and health and the environment. Bainbridge Island measures very high for opportunity in the area, whereas Bremerton has the highest concentration of a low-opportunity index for all of Kitsap County. The United States Census supports this with data indicating that 14.8% of all Bremerton residents live in poverty, as opposed to the 8.3% for Kitsap County as a whole.

Mr. Jackson reviewed that at the Planning Commission’s May 22nd meeting, staff presented three economic market studies with the overriding message that the Federal Government is the mainstay of the county’s economy. The County’s share of total military employment far surpasses the other military communities in the country. At a Fall 2022 forum, the Kitsap Economic Development Alliance shared a number of factors about how the maritime industry is strong within the County. They also shared that Washington State unemployment was down to 3.7%, and wages were increasing dramatically but not keeping up with inflation. The overall message was that future federal contracting, particularly with upcoming defense spending, should be the focal point of the community’s economic development efforts.

Mr. Jackson reviewed some of the City’s significant employers:

- Naval Base Kitsap (NBK) is the largest employer in Kitsap County, and its overall economic impact was estimated to be around \$4 billion. The base employs as many as 23,000 workers. The Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS), a tenant of NBK, employs about 12,500 workers; about 36% of these workers live in the City of Bremerton. The City is expecting a multi-mission dry dock to be installed at the PSNS in the future, but they don’t currently have any estimates about the economic impact this project will bring to the community.
- The City of Bremerton has a budget of about \$224 million and employs approximately 400 workers. The Capital Improvement Plan for 2023 is estimated to be about \$10.7 million, with additional millions of dollars being contributed via the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the Abatement Fund, and the Lodging Tax Fund.
- For 2019-2020, Olympic College contributed \$204 million to the Kitsap and Mason County economies. They employ about 782 full and part-time staff. Olympic College graduates earn about \$11,800 more per year compared to a person with just a high school diploma. For every dollar students invest in their Olympic College education, they receive \$6.60 in future earnings.
- Per 2018 numbers, the Port of Bremerton has an economic output of approximately \$1.2 billion, as well as 5,600 jobs and \$348 million in labor income in Kitsap County. The Port owns approximately 1,700 acres of the Puget Sound Industrial Center (PCIS), and about 2,500 port-related jobs were reported in 2018, about 1,000 more than in 2015. The Port also owns Bremerton Marina, which has 220 permanent slips and 80 to 100 guest slips.

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Mr. Jackson advised that staff continues with outreach to economic stakeholders. They met with the Charleston Business District on November 15th and the Greater Kitsap Chamber of Commerce on November 16th. Both interactions were positive, with a lot of questions about development standards. They anticipate putting together a task force to work directly with the City on economic development. Staff will attend a Downtown Business Association meeting on November 22nd and a Manette Business Association meeting on December 5th.

At the request of the Commission at their last meeting, **Mr. Jackson** provided an update on the Community Survey responses, noting that a more complete summary of the responses would be provided after the survey closes on February 1st. The City has received 43 responses to date. He reviewed the responses as follows:

- **Question 1 – Please rank Bremerton’s most attractive qualities.** The overall score indicates that the listed qualities were evenly ranked by the respondents. Some respondents wrote in additional qualities, such as honoring the City’s military foundations, having a strong culture of inclusion for all types of people and culture, small town living with the conveniences of a large nearby city, diversity, having a historical city center, and transportation system. There were also some constructive criticism notes, including that the ferry system doesn’t supply easy access to Seattle, the need to increase public safety, and the shoreline has resulted in less public access.
- **Question 2 – In 2022, what is Bremerton’s most important issue?** Overall improvements to the City’s infrastructure and roads were very important, but the number one issue was housing choice and affordable housing. Another high priority was revitalization of the City’s commercial areas. Write-in suggestions included improving Washington State Ferry service, thinking about how the elements are connected to one another instead of isolated, and homelessness and crime.
- **Question 3 – What should the City focus on improving during the next 20 years?** Revitalizing commercial areas was identified as most important to respondents, followed by affordable housing and housing options and improvements to the City’s infrastructure. Write-in comments included maintaining the feeling of openness in the City and no changes to density, limiting building heights to seven stories, stopping the spread of commercial growth and encouraging growth in the remainder of Kitsap County instead of Bremerton, improving downtown with stores and restaurants, improving the City’s infrastructure, improving public spaces, becoming a thoughtful, sustainable, affordable pleasant place to live with original, thriving small mid-sized businesses engaged in the community while providing a minimal environmental impact, housing of all price ranges, revitalizing commercial areas, and alleviating homelessness and blighted areas.
- **Question 4 – The City’s current Comprehensive Plan has a vision statement that emphasizes economic vitality, jobs, housing, recreational opportunities, and diversity of lifestyles. Is this a vision that still has applicability and should be carried forward?** The overall message is that the existing vision statement is still very valid or mostly valid. Some write-in comments identified items that were missing from the vision statement, including maintaining public spaces, high standards of living, more citizen input and racial equity.
- **Question 5 – If you had \$100 to spend on the topics below, how would you spend it?** The money was spread pretty evenly, particularly amongst the top four: affordable housing (\$950), improved transportation (\$835), improved parks and public open space (\$825), environmental protection (\$715) and improved police services (\$595). Other topics included improving sidewalks and roads, encouraging PSNS to build parking structures, improving parking, investing in overall retail cores such as Charleston, East Park, Sixth Street and Evergreen Park area, revitalizing schools and downtown core, providing facilities and services that address homelessness and mental health, restrooms for the homeless, and quality medical access.
- **Question 6 – If you could change one thing about Bremerton, what would it be?** The number on response was traffic related issues (11), followed by revitalization of downtown (7), housing and homelessness (5), appearance (2) and zoning (2). There were 14 other comments that included improvements to schools, a hospital system, safety, tree retention, creating a single Bremerton business district, employment opportunities and encouraging the City to expand its jurisdictional boundaries.

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- **Question 7 – Throughout the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update, the City of Bremerton will conduct many public meetings to engage the community. What is your preferred method of participating in this process?** The majority of people indicated they would prefer to engage through surveys via social media, websites, or email. This supports the City’s plan to do additional surveys. The second choice was via Zoom/in-person hybrid meetings.

Mr. Jackson advised that demographic data was also collected via the survey:

- **How long have you lived and/or worked in Bremerton?** A large number (19) of the respondents indicated they had lived in the City for more than 20 years, and 15 answered that they had lived in the City for five or less years.
- **If you live in Bremerton, do you own your home?** The majority (37) of the respondents were homeowners.
- **What is your race?** The vast majority of the respondents were white (31). There were no black or African American or American Indian or Alaska Native respondents. This points to a need for the City to encourage outreach in these particular demographics.
- **What is the highest level of education you have completed?** The majority of respondents (30) had either a bachelor’s or graduate degree, which represents a disproportionate part of the City’s population since only 25% of Bremerton residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- **What is your age?** Most of the respondents were between 26 to 41 years old (20), followed by 42 to 57 (10) and 58 to 76 (11).
- **What is your household income?** Twenty-six respondents reported incomes over \$100,000, which represents a disproportionate amount of the City’s population.

Mr. Jackson announced that the Commission’s next meeting on January 23rd will focus on the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. He shared a chart outlining the work schedule for the Comprehensive Plan Update, as well as a map showing the updated physical locations where flyers for upcoming public meetings will be posted. Additional locations include several park kiosks, as well as the Marvin Williams Center. Staff is coordinating with the Manette Business Association to have a table at the Manette Winterfest event on December 2nd.

Mr. Jackson concluded his presentation by once again inviting the Commissioners and public to provide feedback on the existing Economic Development Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Tift invited public comments, but there were none.

Commissioner Wofford observed that redevelopment of the downtown business districts is really constricted by the seismic stability of the existing buildings. He asked staff to have a discussion with the Public Works Department and the Downtown Business District about what could be done to make the buildings safe and suitable for small businesses, which are fundamentally needed for the downtown to prosper. **Mr. Jackson** said he could relay that message to City staff.

Commissioner Coviello asked if there is money in the budget to do a citywide mailer. He suggested this would be one way to engage some of the underserved communities. **Mr. Jackson** responded that a mailer was sent to every resident and property owner within the City, advertising the Comprehensive Plan process, and they plan to send additional mailers out as they work through the process.

Commissioner Mosiman referred to Goal ED1, which talks about encouraging adaptive reuse of existing commercial structures. He recalled that, at a recent meeting, a presenter commented that the high vacancy rate for office space is due to a lack of parking options. If the City wants to encourage adaptive reuse of the buildings, they need to address the parking issue. He also referred to Goal ED4, specifically Implementing Policy ED4(A). He commented that, although the Economic Development Chapter addresses the entire City, the lack of parking for ferry commuters and NBK is primarily a problem in the downtown area. He suggested that this goal belongs in the Downtown Subarea Plan, instead. He questioned what could be done to make it easier for the rest of Kitsap County residents to easily come to downtown Bremerton. Given the future of electric vehicles (EVs), the Comprehensive Plan should address the need for supporting infrastructure for all types of transportation modes. **Mr. Jackson** said there is a great discussion about parking in the joint transportation study with NBK. In addition to the downtown area, parking problems have expanded into the neighborhoods. He commented that some of the solutions being considered are more regional in scope, as far as providing parking garages further away from downtown and

providing shuttle services. A parking garage is already an allowed use in the Downtown Subarea Plan in certain zones, and there is no proposal to change that. However, he agreed that the plan should address commuter parking and EV infrastructure.

Commissioner Mosiman said he likes the idea of dispersed parking areas for commuter traffic, with a shuttle service. However, that won't be an attractive option for bringing people to downtown Bremerton who want to shop, dine or visit. They must address parking for commuters as well as visitors/commerce.

Vice Chair Rich said she thinks of the Economic Development Chapter as the City's guiding strategy for the future. She noted that while living wage is called out in Policy ED1(D), she would love to see even more about employees and future employees and their experience. This could include language like "prioritizing the interests of employees," including small business owners or self-employed people. Based on the data provided, they can expect more wealth and gentrification in the City and all of the concerns that come with it. It would be great to add language about prioritizing egalitarian solutions that focus on economic opportunity and that require future decisions to be filtered to resist those that benefit residents with the most wealth and/or opportunity.

Chair Tift recalled a recent presentation to the Commission by a commercial real estate broker who spoke about the inability to invest in and rent buildings in the downtown area because there is inadequate parking. Issues related to seismic stability is also a concern. He noted that, prior to September 2001, many of the buildings were occupied by Navy personnel. Parking was not an impediment to the occupation of the buildings because the Navy had other established parking areas. He doesn't know of another solution to the problem other than removing some of the buildings. However, there is a large population of personnel working within 100 yards of downtown, and there is an opportunity to capture that audience as they head home from their work day.

Chair Tift agreed that the parking problem involves more than just the downtown, yet many of the conversations tend to focus on the downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods. He cautioned against focusing solely on the downtown area at the exclusion of these other important commercial areas.

Mr. Jackson pointed out that, with the exception of adding residential uses, a change of use in the downtown area does not trigger an additional parking requirement. However, the private demand for parking is something that needs to be further explored.

Commissioner Coviello commented that as the Comprehensive Plan update moves forward, he will continue to remind the community of the high-capacity transit plan between Silverdale and Bremerton. This plan has potential for economic generation along the Wheaton Way Corridor all the way to downtown from the City limits. Looking at high-capacity corridors around the country, there is a lot of potential for rezoning around the transit stops to increase the use of properties and provide more flexibility to property owners. For example, parking ratios could be lowered to lean towards future transit ridership. He anticipates a conflict between investors who are looking for a more suburban model of parking and Vision 2050 and the City's Comprehensive Plan that both have a very different outlook.

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Report

Chair Tift thanked the Commissioners for their participation in the recent elections, as well as their attendance at the meeting.

Director Report

Mr. Jackson reported that, earlier in the month, the City Council accepted the Planning Commission's recommendation for the Comprehensive Plan Work Schedule and Public Participation Plan. The City Council also approved changes to the City's Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) Program by adding a 12-year extension potential for projects that provide affordable housing and a 20-year extension potential for projects that are 100% affordable housing.

It was announced that the Commission's December meeting was cancelled, and their next meeting will be on January 23rd.

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Old Business

Chair Tift advised that he reviewed the Planning Commission Rules and Bylaws and did not have any changes to recommend. None of the other Commissioners identified changes, either.

New Business

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 p.m.

Respectively Submitted by:



Andrea L. Spencer, AICP
Executive Secretary



Rick Tift, Chair
Planning Commission

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