



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting
January 11, 2010
City Hall, Boards & Commissions Room
301 West Second Street, Austin, TX 78701

MINUTES

Committee Members in Attendance:

Dave Anderson (Chair)
Kathryne Tovo

Dave Sullivan

Other Planning Commission Members in Attendance:

Benjamin De Leon

Members of the public in attendance:

Steven Moore
Patrician Wilson
Jill Fagan
William Shamburg
Danny Roth

Liam [no last name provided]
Rob Goodspeed
Katherine Gregor
Mark Yznaga (Citizens Advisory Task Force)

Members of staff in attendance:

Garner Stoll (PDR)
Kathy Rock (PDR)

Greg Claxton (PDR)

Members of the consultant team in attendance:

John Fernsler (WRT)

Donna Carter (Carter & Associates)

Commissioner Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

None.

2. APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 12, 2009, MINUTES

Approval of minutes was moved to the end of the meeting. Commission Sullivan moved to approve; Commission Tovo seconded. The vote was unanimous.

3. OLD BUSINESS

None.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. *Discussion of the Community Inventory*

Garner Stoll introduced the Community Inventory, a interdepartmental effort by the City to compile data important to the planning process. He noted that there was a draft on the website, but that there were still gaps. He said the current vision for the Inventory was that it would survive the comprehensive plan process, to be a valuable tool for the community in the future. He said that the role of the comprehensive plan consultant, WRT, was to review the Inventory for gaps and then to tease out the implications of the data for the public to consider.

John Fernsler, of WRT, presented their initial work on developing those implications, which will be used in the Strategic Issues Report. Commissioners reviewed the initial implications, making the following comments. Commissioner Anderson noted that some data stopped at the year 2000, which was a decade ago. He noted that, with regard to water issues and drainage, development intensity outpacing the design of infrastructure was the primary issue facing Austin and that the City had done a good job of maintenance. He also noted that water issues dominate environmental discussions in Austin and hoped that the Inventory and Strategic Issues Report would talk about the problem Austin faces with its air quality. Commissioner Sullivan asked whether the Report would include comparisons to other cities, particularly fast-growing Sunbelt cities.

Anderson asked whether the Report would give us an opportunity to tackle the big question of whether we have mechanisms to slow growth and consider our infrastructure and natural capacity for growth. Sullivan asked if the consultants had talked to anyone who blames the City for promoting growth, noting that in one recent year, births exceeded in-migration for Austin. Fernsler said that growth was largely because Austin is a desirable place to live, and that even if Austin's growth is restricted, the region will continue to grow, with continued impacts to Austin.

Mark Yznaga of Liveable City and the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Task Force said that it was important to help people understand what the Community Inventory is there for.

Commissioner Tovo asked what the timetable was for the Report. She said that, to be useful, we need to figure out a way to present it to the public as a snapshot of key data and issues. She suggested that a topic-based joint commission meeting might be a model for delving into these issues. She also noted that the Community Action Network put together a dashboard of indicators for the Austin community that could be a resource. Commissioners discussed the evolving role of the Speakers Bureau throughout the process, and the possibility of introducing data into that presentation.

b. *Discussion of how to address gaps in participation*

Greg Claxton introduced participation demographics for the three venues in the first Community Forum Series: the public meetings themselves, the survey, and

the Meeting-in-a-Box, illustrating the use of targeted outreach for Meeting-in-a-Box as a way of overcoming the gaps in participation.

Commissioner Tovo asked if any effort had gone into targeting workplaces, asking for work-release time for employees to participate. Commission Anderson proposed sending a letter to the City Council or City Manager recommending such release and asking them to contact other public entities with a similar suggestion. Commission moved that the Committee draft the letter, encouraging them to provide incentives to participate in a Meeting-in-a-Box or Speakers Bureau, with the goal of leaving what that incentive is open, be it time off, providing lunch, or something else. Tovo seconded. The vote was unanimous. Tovo and Anderson agreed to draft the letter on behalf of the subcommittee.

Patricia Wilson said that outreach efforts, in addition to having structural, budget, and time problems, also face a problem of "taking off," of building momentum, noting that some cities have a public face that can galvanize action. Taking a broader perspective, she said that starting to get into the major, interconnected issues that face the city should draw people in. Tovo said that touched on something suggested at a prior meeting, of doing a poster campaign of local people and celebrities saying who they are and why they care about the plan.

Mark Yznaga said that the Citizens Advisory Task Force had begun working informally on this. Commissioner De Leon agreed with the importance galvanizing citizens, and asked about outreach to non-profits, particularly Latino and Hispanic non-profits, to reach both their employees and clients. Katherine Gregor said that part of what she's hearing is that one of the desirable outcomes of the planning process is developing a different kind of conversation among the people of Austin, which can only happen when people are in the same room. A survey or Meeting-in-a-Box of like-minded individuals does not accomplish that.

Anderson said that the intent of this item was to get a specific plan for addressing gaps in participation. He said he wanted to see positive and negative lessons from the first Community Forum Series, if not now then at a future meeting.

Jill Fagan noted that the existing system for counting demographics double-counts people who participate in different venues, which is likely to exacerbate the gaps that are already there. Commissioner and staff discussed approaches to overcoming that. Wilson suggested that a Wisdom Council or Citizens Jury might be a way to get a cross-section of Austin plus in-depth conversation and deliberation.

c. *Discussion on how to the City of Austin and the Austin Independent School District can coordinate through and after the Comprehensive Plan*

Commissioner Tovo presented on shared use facilities as an example of coordination between the City and school districts that could help achieve goals of the comprehensive plan that were already being expressed, like improved schools, more libraries, more parks, and more places for the arts.

Commissioner Anderson said that the goal in beginning to discuss these topics is to elevate the Planning Commission's proposed elements to a meaningful role in the Comprehensive Plan, and asked what the best mechanism to accomplish that is. Commissioner Sullivan said that a white paper, in his view, would pull together evidence for why the comprehensive plan should address children in schools. A section could deal with shared use facilities, the connection between the drop out rate and the economy, the role of discouraging childhood obesity in long-term healthcare costs, etc. It would be a starting point in allowing other members of the public to get involved. Tovo said that it should also be an opportunity for looking ahead to supporting what is likely to come from the public, for identifying resources for when the process is ready for that discussion.

Commissioners assigned responsibility for white papers for the three proposed elements: Commissioners Tovo, Sullivan, and Chimenti for children and schools, Commissioner Dealey and Sullivan for the historic and cultural preservation element, and Commissioners Anderson and De Leon for the culture and arts element. The time frame for completing these white papers is the next two or three committee meetings.

5. STAFF BRIEFINGS

- a. *Update on the Comprehensive Plan process.*
Greg Claxton distributed minutes from the Citizens Advisory Task Force. Commissioner Anderson asked if the project was on schedule. Stoll said that we were sliding a little, but not irretrievably behind.
- b. *Directives to staff*
None.

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- 1. Strategic Issues Report draft, if ready.
- 2. Specifics on approaching gaps in participation.
- 3. Update on progress on involving other entities.
- 4. Progress on white paper on 3 proposed elements.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Anderson adjourned the meeting at 8:26 p.m. without objection.

For more information on the Comprehensive Plan Committee of the Planning Commission, please contact Greg Claxton, Planning and Development Review Department, 974-7630.