

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
March 1, 2010

Subcommittee Members: Council Member Sheryl Cole (Chair) - Absent
Council Member Laura Morrison
Council Member Chris Riley

1. Citizen Communication (3 minutes to speak).

Mandy Dealey, representing Planning Commission, stated that a kick-off meeting to develop a framework for the Downtown Plan would be held on March 6, 2010. Additional meetings would be held during the evenings on weekdays and on Saturdays. All meetings would be posted on the City's website.

2. Approval of minutes from the February 1, 2010, regular subcommittee meeting.

Minutes were approved by a vote of 2-0 with corrections.

3. Staff Update on Commercial Design Standards.

George Adams, Planning and Development Review Department, provided a status update on the process to date and schedule for proposed amendments. He gave an overview of the consensus amendments (Phase I) which consist of 20 amendments, most of which are minor clarifications or corrections. There are two substantive amendments related to sidewalk and streetscape amendments for large sites and corner sites and one related to glazing requirements.

The Phase II amendments consist of items that will require additional discussion. The plan is to create a draft ordinance that will be presented to stakeholders and the Code & Ordinances subcommittee for consideration prior to Council approval at the end of the year.

Council Member Riley questioned whether stakeholders will be allowed to provide input prior to creation of the draft ordinance.

George Adams responded that staff is in the process of prioritizing the list of issues that will be addressed in the ordinance. One option would be to request input from stakeholders prior to developing the draft ordinance.

Council Member Riley suggested an additional step be added to the schedule that would allow making adjustments or preparing alternatives to the draft ordinance before it goes to Codes & Ordinances Subcommittee so that there is an opportunity to add items that are not addressed in the draft ordinance.

Council Member Morrison said that one of the challenges is identifying all the issues and she felt this would be a good time to open them up for discussion to ensure that

all the issues are captured. She noted that the neighborhood site design standards were a major issue with neighborhoods, and therefore suggested that specific setback recommendations be left blank in the ordinance in order to solicit discussion and recommendations.

No formal action taken.

4. Staff Update on Comprehensive Plan.

Planning and Development Review staff provided an update on task force activities and citizen participation to date. To date 3,100 citizens have participated and 2,300 have responded to the online survey. In addition, 215 meetings in a box have been scheduled. Greg Claxton addressed the citizen demographics and stated that participation among 18-29 year olds is under represented. He also noted that participation from the African-American and Asian communities is low, however, their participation level is not as low as the level of participation from the Hispanic community. Matt Duggan stated that the Public Information office has produced material such as flyers and brochures, and also developed a public service announcement about the process.

Council Member Riley questioned whether staff had reached out to Hispanic student organizations.

Perla Cavazos, Chair of Engagement Committee, stated that they are in the process of identifying Hispanic student organizations and the religious community. They are hoping to have City leadership sign off on a letter urging Hispanic participation, and she noted that several Spanish speaking Meetings in a Box have been scheduled.

Council Member Riley questioned whether there is an action plan to address the low participation rate from the ethnic communities. He suggested contacting young Hispanic renters without degrees, and reaching out to ACC students. Ms. Cavazos said they have been in discussions with U.T. Hispanic organizations and ACC trustees of Hispanic origin to encourage participation from ACC students. In addition, The Communications committee has been working on distribution of outreach materials and survey gathering, and they have also contacted Commissioner Margaret Gomez and State Rep. Eddie Rodriguez's office to assist as well. Some of the demographic gaps will be filled once they approach the student community.

Mark Yznaga, task force member, spoke about the need to have transparency in the plan and the need to post the responses to the survey on a public website or central location so they can be viewed by the public. He said there is a need to get the maximum credibility out of this process. Garner Stoll responded that results from the community series forum are available for viewing by the public at the Planning and Development Office. He noted that in order for the responses to the survey to be meaningful, they needed to be categorized, and that the intent of the working paper to is to categorize the responses. He added that the March 9th workshop would include a forum to look at all of the information and to start a meaningful discussion about how to translate the public responses into meaningful categories.

Mandy Dealey, representing Planning Commission, read a letter into the record from Dave Sullivan, Chair of the Planning commission, stating that it is difficult for the Planning Commission to participate because the task force meetings are held on Tuesdays, which conflict with Planning Commission and Zoning and Platting Commission meetings, and the task force meetings are not televised. He also spoke to the need to add three additional elements: Children and Schools, Cultural and Historic Preservation, and Arts and Culture. In addition, the process needs to engage more young, blue collar citizens that live outside the central city.

Mark Yznaga agreed that there is a communication hurdle with the Planning Commission. He also added that although PIO is assisting with materials, they are mostly operating as a PR function, and the task force remains without necessary material

There was discussion about how the task force could communicate with the Planning Commission and CTPC, and it was suggested that the CPTC have a standing monthly agenda item whereby the task force would update the CPTC. It was also suggested that a separate meeting be scheduled. There was also discussion about meeting at happy hours, communicating by e-mail, or using other online resource to communicate.

Perla Cavazos stated that a physical working meeting is more effective than e-mail, and agreed with Mr. Yznaga that they are struggling with the communication piece, and that lack of communication with the Planning Commission will hurt in the long run. She said she preferred to have Planning Commission members present at the task force meetings, especially when they discuss planning and development issues. She also wanted to underscore the need to post citizen input on the internet. At the end of the process, they want to make sure there is full community support, and ideally they would like to have 10,000 supporters of Imagine Austin so that when it does go to City Council, there will be full confidence in the plan. Having as much citizen input on the web will lead toward that goal.

Council Member Morrison questioned whether it would make sense to take a draft of the vision statement back through the public input process.

Ms. Cavazos said the public input phase (Phase I) needs to be extended, but felt that the vision statement needs to proceed.

Council Member Riley said there is a strong desire for further communication and it may be necessary to have another briefing before the CPTC to allow for additional discussion of the vision statement before a full presentation at Council.

Mark Yznaga said that the problem is that people don't understand the process and what happens at different levels of the process, and the Council needs to have an understanding of it as well in order for it to succeed. He urged moving forward with the vision statement because too much time is passing.

There was discussion about whether there should be additional discussion on the vision statement at CPTC before it proceeds to Council. Council Member Morrison

said they would discuss the process among themselves, but hoped that the lessons learned in this phase would result in targets for the next phase.

Council Member Riley suggested that the task force create a “coordinating committee” to work with staff, Planning Commission and Council. This committee would assist in analyzing the demographic data and assist with the credibility issue and long term success of the plan. An additional committee that addresses other issues such as scheduling meetings to discuss the issues discussed at today’s meeting should also be created to increase communication and help move the process forward.

No formal action taken.