

**Snohomish City Council Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2022**

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Redmon called the Snohomish City Council regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 1, 2022.

COUNCILMEMBERS/MAYOR PRESENT

Lea Anne Burke
David Flynn
Karen Guzak
Judith Kuleta
Tom Merrill
Felix Neals
Donna Ray
Linda Redmon, Mayor

STAFF PRESENT

Brooke Eidem, Planner
Emily Guildner, City Attorney
Scott James, Finance Director
Rob Palmer, Police Chief
Rebekah Park, HR Manager/Clerk
Glen Pickus, Planning Director
Wendy Poischbeg, Economic Development and
Communications Manager
Steve Schuller, City Administrator and Utility
General Manager
Brandi Whitson, City Clerk

NOTE: Due to the COVID-19 declared federal, state and local emergency, and pursuant to Governor Inslee's Proclamations 20-05 and 20-28, the Snohomish City Council held its meeting via remote participation.

2. **APPROVE AGENDA** contents and order.

MOTION by Kuleta, second by Burke, to remove Action Item 6b. from the agenda. Brief discussion followed over the intent of the item, to which Ms. Guildner advised that deliberation and discussion should be held during the scheduled agenda item.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion failed (0-7), all Councilmembers voting against.

MOTION by Guzak, second by Ray to amend the standard order of business and move Action Items 6a. and 6b. before Public Hearing 5., and accept the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

3. **CONSENT ITEMS:**

- a. **CONFIRM** Mayor's Appointment to the Planning Commission
- b. **APPROVE** Minutes of the January 18, 2022 regular meeting
- c. **AUTHORIZE** payment of claim warrants #76240 through #76296 in the amount of \$420,207.54, and payroll warrants #70197 through #76306 in the amount of \$505,732.82, issued since the last regular meeting.

MOTION by Guzak, second by Merrill to PASS the Consent Items. Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Ival Salyer, in writing, regarding sidewalks and safety on Terrace Avenue.

Jesse Podoll, in writing, supported opportunities to discuss the Terrace Avenue issues.

Gordon Cole commented on returning to in-person meetings.

John Kartak commented on land uses and development, transparency in government, and small town values.

M. Richardson commented that proposed development provided opportunities.

Kristine Hansen agreed with comments made regarding safety on Terrace Avenue.

Morgan Davis opposed multifamily property tax exemptions.

Victor Pierce commented on Snohomish ideals and utilizing Zoom for meetings.

Jenn Hayes commented on the Snohomish Farmers Market location.

6. **ACTION ITEMS** (*Moved ahead of Public Hearing 5. at the beginning of the meeting*):

a. **CONFIRM** Mayor's Appointment/Promotion: Economic Development Director

Ms. Park provided background on the item, indicating Ms. Poischbeg's extensive experience and her efforts in promoting the economic development within the City, with an emphasis on business services, communications, and related programs. The role of Economic Development and Communications Manager has evolved and expanded, brought on in part by the global pandemic. To recognize the changing role, Council was asked to recognize Ms. Poischbeg's contributions by establishing an Economic Development and Communications Director, and appointing Ms. Poischbeg.

Councilmember Ray inquired about the reference to additional staff reporting to the Economic Development Director. Ms. Park replied future staff may be proposed, including casual labor to assist with managing the Snohomish Carnegie and special events. In addition, the approved ARPA Recovery Specialist position reports to the Economic Development Director and Finance Director, to track usage of ARPA funds and supporting the business community.

Councilmember Neals acknowledged Ms. Poischbeg's contributions, and questioned if an updated job description would be outlined. Ms. Park replied staff was working on one.

Public Comments:

Morgan Davis opposed the pay increase as not being fiscally responsible.

Public Comments: Closed

MOTION by Guzak, second by Merrill to RECLASSIFY the Economic Development and Communications Manager position to Economic Development and Communications Director effective February 1, 2022, and add the position changes to a future budget amendment in 2022.

Council President Merrill remarked that the City can be frugal by retaining employees, and that economic development generated revenue for future generations.

Councilmember Neals recognized the importance of such a position, with economic development to help distinguish Snohomish and retain top talent. He also remarked on the competitive market and encouraged staff to review disproportionate salaries.

Councilmember Ray concurred, and stated economic development was important to generate sales tax revenues for City services. She requested proposed positions be defined and provided with the upcoming budget discussions.

Mayor Redmon explained Ms. Park was reviewing staffing levels in relation to Council plans and goals. Reclassification of the Economic Development Director was also anticipated to fill a need for strong communication with the community.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

- b. **APPROVE** Endorsement of League of Women Voters of Snohomish County's Letter to Snohomish County Recommending Adoption of an Urban Tree Canopy Policy

Councilmember Guzak explained she received a request from the League of Women Voters to be a signatory on a letter of multiple agencies supporting that Snohomish County develop a tree policy. She felt the request was in line with the City's intentions of developing a policy of its own.

Councilmember Burke inquired if the City would be financially committed by participating, and clarifying the City's policy would be separate. Councilmember Guzak confirmed there was no financial commitment; it was to support upgrading a tree policy. Mr. Pickus concurred, and explained signing the letter supported the resolution to adopt a policy. If the County did adopt a policy, it would not impact the City within City limits.

Councilmember Kuleta questioned some of the specifics outlined in the proposal. Councilmember Guzak replied the County may approve part or all as proposed; at this point, action was to support the idea of a policy.

Public Comments:

Morgan Davis supported the resolution and retaining open space in the City.

John Kartak suggested including information on Tree City USA in the *Snohomish Quarterly*.

Kate Lunceford, League of Women Voters of Snohomish County, requested City Council support and briefly described the proposed tree policy and benefits.

Victor Pierce requested comparison of standards in place currently to those proposed.

Don Dillinger, Green Snohomish, supported endorsing the letter.

Amy Buddie supported preserving trees.

Public Comments: Closed

Councilmember Ray supported the resolution in light of the City's goal to expand environmental sustainability and understanding of tree canopy and environmental health.

Councilmember Flynn voiced support of the endorsement.

Councilmember Burke expressed supporting tree canopies and their benefits to the community.

MOTION by Guzak second by Ray, to support signing the League of Women Voters's letter recommending adoption of a proposed new policy on urban tree canopy into the

General Policy Plan for the 2024 update of Snohomish County Growth Management Act Comprehensive Plan. Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

5. **PUBLIC HEARING:** Midtown District Development Regulations and Rezone - Ordinance 2425

- a. Announce purpose and open public hearing. Mayor Redmon opened the public hearing and introduced Mr. Pickus.
- b. Staff presentation. Mr. Pickus provided background on the Midtown District and outlined the action proposed as the last step of the process. He explained the catalyst of the process was the intent of the County to sell their former shop yard on Avenue D. Council wanted to be proactive in how it could be developed, as well as reviewing growth and economic development. Regulations would apply to the entire district, not just the County yard site, and cautioned against adopting site-specific regulations.

Mr. Pickus explained the background of the Task Force, their mission, and ultimate goal of developing recommendations to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission received the recommendations and reviewed for implementation. A new Chapter 14.214, entitled "Midtown District Development Regulations," was proposed, together with other code amendments and rezones to accommodate the new district. He explained the purpose of 14.214 was to reflect the Snohomish character while promoting a diverse mix of uses. The chapter consisted of five articles: administration, required and prohibited uses, block frontage standards, site planning standards, and building design standards.

Mr. Pickus described the dimension requirements table in relation to the new district, proposing density be driven by building height and parking requirements, rather than set units per acre. He described the differences between the Task Force's and Planning Commission's recommendations regarding building height. The Planning Commission preferred 35' in both overlays, and 45' for buildings fronting Bonnevill Avenue. They felt taller buildings were contrary to Snohomish's character and were not in demand. The Task Force recommended 45' in the South (4 stories), and 55' in the North (5 stories). Staff concurred with the Task Force's recommendation, referencing drawbacks associated with the lower 35' height. Other areas of deviation were in the requirement of commercial space to promote a vibrant mixed use area, and parking requirements to accommodate the City's still auto-centric community.

Mr. Pickus introduced:

Bob Bengford with MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design, who helped with the Midtown Task Force surveys.

Bill Trimm, facilitator of the Midtown Task Force meetings .

AP Hurd, Skip-Stone, developer, finance, real estate subject-matter expert.

Mr. Bengford shared some slides on an approach to allow choices for parking, while providing a slow transition from auto-centric to pedestrian-friendly. Regarding building height, the visual preference survey came down to design and materials. Taller buildings allowed for parking within the structure and supported additional space for multiple uses to help spur development and economic viability.

Mr. Trimm explained the process he used with facilitating the Task Force, which included several aerial visuals of the Midtown area and reviewing existing development. Based on results of visual surveys, they developed the proposed design standards. Public input

was sought and considered in development of the policies, seeking to engage them to help define their community.

Ms. Hurd described her background as a developer throughout the Puget Sound region and her experience with how land use policies shaped outcomes. She explained how building height supported mixed uses and sustainable construction; the less expensive to construct, the more affordable for people to use. Focusing retail in a single area helped draw pedestrians, and commercial/retail spaces could be retrofitted in the future. She mentioned redevelopment of a site should also be considered; for instance, demolition of a one story building to build a three story structure was not the most economically-feasible for a developer to do. In regards to parking, it was important to consider future parking needs may be less than current, incorporating parking in a building meant using materials that were more expensive, and on-street parking actually makes pedestrians feel safer and encourages going to a business at a particular location because of access to parking.

c. Council's questions of staff.

Councilmember Burke questioned if there were any Planning Commission recommendations that should be considered to move forward. Mr. Pickus responded the Commission fully embraced the design standards, and differences were in the three areas previously discussed--building height, commercial requirements, and parking.

Councilmember Kuleta asked for examples of successful structures with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential above. Mr. Pickus described the Mill Creek Town Center. Mr. Trimm was involved with the Town Center and described some of the designs and difficulties in initially obtaining support. Eventually a developer took a risk on the area and has proven successful.

Councilmember Neals inquired on potential impacts to other areas of the City, such as regarding parking. Mr. Pickus answered parking regulations in the Midtown District would have the least amount of impact elsewhere in the City or other commercial areas.

Councilmember Burke clarified buildings over 50 and 40 feet already exist in the City. Mr. Pickus confirmed there were buildings in the Historic District, as well as the new apartment complex off Weaver was 59 feet, which was allowed in the Business Park zone.

Councilmember Ray questioned density requirements related to the Growth Management Act. Mr. Pickus explained the GMA allowed cities to determine how they will accommodate growth targets, however, targets were not mandatory. Reports indicated Snohomish had adequate space to accommodate growth. The density proposals were to serve the community in providing housing options to a greater number of those wishing to reside in Snohomish and might not otherwise afford to do so.

Councilmember Ray inquired on a comparison to the Pilchuck District. Mr. Pickus explained the Pilchuck District allowed taller buildings and transfer of development rights; this was not being proposed for Midtown.

Council President Merrill questioned if other cities had housing or demographics targets they were trying to reach. Mr. Trimm responded that Mill Creek left it to the market to determine the type of housing used, while conforming to design guidelines. Ms. Hurd

mentioned the Fair Housing Act, and unless it was an age-restricted community one could not say who moved into an area; although certain designs tended to appeal to different demographics.

Council President Merrill asked if design standards would meet the income profile for missing middle options. Ms. Hurd suggested taller buildings in wood, and not including parking in the structure, would keep costs down.

Councilmember Guzak queried time and patience needed, as existing structures along Avenue D could remain for many years. Mr. Trimm affirmed, as well as having perseverance.

Mayor Redmon inquired on development related to equity, environmental sustainability, and fiscal management. Mr. Pickus explained allowing more intensive development to provide housing options could address equity. Midtown could help address the issue but would not alleviate it. Staff could present options regarding incentives, such as the multifamily tax deferral program, to help meet Council goals. Mr. Bengford mentioned density in units per acre meant a small studio was the same as a large single family home, so removing density limits as proposed allowed more flexibility to meet market needs.

Councilmember Ray questioned exclusion of affordable housing, but rather increasing housing options. Mr. Pickus explained references were not to “low income housing,” as very low income housing would require assistance in the form of rent control or vouchers. He believed increasing the number of and options of housing would help create market-rate affordable units. Ms. Hurd remarked types of housing can attract equity investors and other tools to achieve levels of affordability.

At 8:46 p.m., **MOTION** by Ray, second by Flynn to extend the meeting to 10 p.m. Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

RECESS at 8:47 p.m. for five minutes, to reconvene at 8:52 p.m.

d. Public testimony:

Craig Skotdal, in writing, supported increasing building heights to provide development flexibility.

Steve Dana, in writing, supported commercial along Avenue D, taller buildings, and on-street angled parking.

John Kartak opposed removing density limits or increasing building heights.

Gordon Cole commented on the need for accessible parking and perhaps an overlay based on geographic features.

M. Richardson expressed the time taken by the Task Force, public involvement, and potential to increase sales tax revenue.

Brian Vanneman, Leland Consulting, supported increasing building height.

Hank Eskridge remarked on building heights applied to entire district and did not support increasing heights.

Morgan Davis did not support increasing building heights or providing tax exemptions.

Randy Blain, Snohomish County, reported feasibility study was consistent with Task Force recommendations on building height.

Becky commented on increased traffic on Avenue D from more units.

Paul Kaftanski supported staff recommendations.

Mandi Roberts, OTAK, provided visual representations of building heights in the district. **Sasha Belgard** did not support higher buildings.

Mitch Cornelison disapproved of remarks from consultants who did not reside in Snohomish and did not support higher buildings.

Terry Lippincott supported Task Force findings and planning for the future.

Frank Sandoval supported incorporating commercial uses to support sales tax revenue.

Janice Lengenfelder supported the proposal, and commented the rest of Snohomish would remain residential.

Merritt Weese supported the proposed recommendations in relation to jobs and economic activity.

Victor Pierce commented on inflation, affordability, and small town values.

- e. Close public testimony. Mayor Redmon closed public testimony.

MOTION by Merrill, second by Flynn, to waive Council rules regarding a 10 p.m. end time and hold the public hearing open until its conclusion. Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

MOTION by Merrill, second by Flynn, to remove the remaining items of the agenda and end the meeting at the conclusion of the public hearing. Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

- f. Council deliberation.

Councilmember Guzak appreciated the public comment, and felt strongly included to support the Task Force recommendations. The Task Force was comprised of community members. Building height was important to provide affordable housing.

Councilmember Flynn appreciated comments, and was in favor of adopting the ordinance.

Councilmember Burke commended the amount of research and work accomplished on the matter, and the deliberation and thoughtfulness of the project. She believed density is in areas such as this was the most environmentally sustainable use of land; if not here then where? She described the efforts as a perfect example of proactive planning and supported staff recommendations.

Councilmember Kuleta thanked everyone for the comments. She believed the Task Force was passionate about retaining Snohomish character. She stated consultants did not tell the Task Force what to do, they provided options. There was a lot of thoughtful deliberation. Changed was difficult and unpopular to some, but was inevitable. Better to do this or have it done to us. She agreed with Councilmember Burke that Avenue D was the right location.

Councilmember Neals expressed the belief that all were in support of a mix of commercial and residential growth. There were other ideas to reconcile. He felt the decision was not just about aesthetics; this was an entirely new concept for a town of this size, but agreed something has to be done. He speculated on where other areas were for growth, and impacts of change on other areas; building heights could be applied in different areas. He did not feel anything other than the taller heights as being feasible.

Councilmember Ray expressed she was not a fan of growth for growth's sake, or development for development's sake. The Task Force helped explore an area that could

accommodate an increased tax based for revenue and additional housing options. She believed the taller buildings fostered commercial activities, and proximity of commercial to residential attracted people, rather than being spread out throughout the City. Concentrating increased heights in this location could be offset by other areas of the City. In addition, the City faced challenges regarding revenue, so she supported activities that increased revenue. She supported staff recommendations regarding heights, parking and commercial use.

g. Council motion and action - **ADOPT Ordinance 2425.**

MOTION by Guzak, second by Merrill, to ADOPT Ordinance 2425 to rezone the Commercial zone in the area of Avenue D from Sixth Street north to SR 9 to Midtown District and to amend Title 14 Snohomish Municipal Code, to create a new Midtown Zoning District with its own development regulations and design standards as recommended by the Planning Commission except as follows:

1. In SMC 14.210.330, Table 1, set the maximum building height in the Midtown District to be 45 feet in the South Overlay and 55 feet in the North Overlay as recommended by the Midtown Task Force.
 2. In Chapter 14.214 SMC require all buildings fronting Avenue D to have space designed for commercial uses on the street level that is at least 20 feet deep and averages at least 40 feet in depth, and occupies 25%-50% of the façade's width depending on the length of the Avenue D frontage for the development site consistent with the Midtown Task Force recommendation.
 3. In SMC Chapter 14.214, Article III, prohibit new street-level parking adjacent to the street for the Storefront and Landscaped Block Frontage types as recommended by the Midtown Task Force.
 4. The Bonneville frontage type is only to be allowed on Bonneville Avenue.
- Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

h. Close public hearing. Mayor Redmon closed the public hearing.

~~7. **OTHER BUSINESS/INFORMATION ITEMS**~~

~~8. **COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS/LIAISON REPORTS**~~

~~9. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S ITEMS/REPORTS**~~

~~10. **CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS**~~

~~11. **MAYOR'S COMMENTS**~~

(Items 7-11 waived from the meeting when motion passed earlier to end the meeting at the conclusion of the public hearing.)

12. **ADJOURN:** There being no objection, the meeting adjourned at 10:08 p.m.

APPROVED this 1st day of March, 2022.

CITY OF SNOHOMISH

ATTEST:

Linda Redmon, Mayor

Brandi Whitson, City Clerk