



Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission City of Bellingham

January 15, 2025

Hybrid Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Janice Keller.

City Representatives: Janice Keller, Deputy Administrator; Blake Lyon, Planning & Community Development Director

MINUTES

Opening Comments

- Janice mentioned that Mayor Lund was unable to attend the meeting because she's in Olympia for the Governor's inaugural events.
- Janice informed the group that Tracy Lewis moved to a new position with the Port of Bellingham so Janice and Victoria will be their points of contact.

Approval of November 2024 Meeting Minutes

- A motion was made to approve November's minutes and was seconded.

Blake Lyon, Planning Department – Parking Reform & other actions from Housing Executive Order

- Blake passed out a hard copy of the [Mayor's executive order Expanding Housing Options](#) for the group to review.
- Blake explained that we're past the day when household demographics were consistent; they vary wildly in today's society, so there is a broader need to talk about housing at a variety of different spectrums.
- Section 1. Administrative actions ordered: There is a complexity to the work that is being discussed, and there isn't a single solution, so there is a need to look at the issue from a variety of different perspectives, which is the emphasis behind the executive order.
- Section 2. Legislative actions for accelerated City Council consideration: The removal of parking minimums citywide; increased middle housing (multi-family units); and streamlined design review processes.
- Sheryl Russell (City Center) asked if the Planning Design Review Board would be available to meet and discuss issues that have come up from past low-income housing developments to make sure those issues don't arise with new developments. Blake commented that some of his staff would be available to come to a neighborhood association meeting to discuss different views.
- Kerri Burnside (Silver Beach) asked about the parking reform ordinance and what the actual monetary need is for the 0-60% income bracket and if there's a way to do something similar to Seattle that helps close the gap. Blake explained that the city brings in about \$14-15 million a year in federal, state and local funds for affordable housing, which is about 20% of the need, and explained the nuances of the current housing and parking issues. Kerri asked if there are additional measures that can be taken to obtain more funds to close that wide gap. Blake explained that the interim ordinance gives the ability to assess how all the factors weave together and use the available tools to see what may need to be adjusted within the program.

- Blake presented a PowerPoint titled “Eliminating Parking Minimums – Interim Ordinance” and shared a few slides and comments. He said the full presentation is available on the December 16th or the January 13th City Council meeting recording.
- Brianne O’Hare (Lettered Streets) asked about the timeline for the design review interim ordinance to go into effect. Blake explained the steps: public hearing, first and second reading, third and final meeting, then 15 days later the ordinance becomes effective.
- Sheryl Russel (City Center) asked if there is anything being done to help make insurance rates for multi-unit buildings be more affordable, and to ensure that we’re not going to be constructing uninsurable buildings. Blake explained that the whole insurance marketplace is changing in this country, partially due to natural disasters, but he’s unsure if Bellingham has enough weight to influence national policies, however it is a changing landscape that they are paying close attention to.
- Another participant asked how Blake and the Mayor’s Office see the future of neighborhood associations in Bellingham. Blake explained that most if not all the neighborhoods have plans in place which are adopted as a frame of reference into the comprehensive plan. Due to state mandates, there is not time to amend all neighborhood plans in this comprehensive plan cycle. Many of the components in the neighborhood plans have been pulled into the city’s bike plan, ped plan, etc., so there is still value in knowing what the neighborhoods want to see and contribute. Janice said the focus of MNAC has evolved into more social connection, creating a sense of belonging, and working together on emergency preparedness.

Other Updates

- Increased Annual Neighborhood Reimbursement
 - o Mayor Lund has decided to increase the annual neighborhood expense reimbursement amount from \$700 to \$1,000. Janice encouraged everyone to take advantage of that and to reach out if there are questions.

Closing Comments:

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

The next meeting is February 19, 2025.