

Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Hybrid meeting

Meeting #56 June 18th, 2024 2:00 PM

Advisory Group Members in attendance: Ryan Babbit, Clinton Brink, Michael R. Fast, Ben Ferguson, Jason Gano, Justin Goroch, Brett Johnson, Robert Laing

Excused: Layne Alfonso, Gomer Roseman, Loundyne Hare

Absent: Claude Remy

2:07 PM Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Chair Justin Goroch.

2:11 PM Approval of Minutes

Meeting #55: Clinton Brink moved. Mike Fast seconded. No discussion or objection. Motion approved.

2:09PM Public Comment

Public Comment was provided by Peter Wright. He sent TPAG Chair, Justin Goroch an email asking if this group has any documents that discussed easement standards. Some communities require a 10 ft easement and the city is looking at allowing utility easements with a 5 ft setback. He does not need an immediate response but would like someone to reach out to him. Justin advised he has an answer and will get back to him. City Staff Chris Johnson adds that public vs private sides we are defaulting to the private property side. Chris Johnson advised to email tacomapermits@cityoftacoma.org with further questions.

2:13 PM Quick updates: City staff new items of interest

- Administrative updates –
 - Planning and Development Services (PDS) hired a new construction inspection supervisor Seana Essex. We are double-filling the role with Steve Taylor Sr. until December 2024. PDS also added an engineering office coordinator Megan Norman, and filled the ET2 position with Christen Sagon. The site-side staffing feels good at this time. Application services lost Tasha Santos to Pierce County. For the Traffic Review Engineer, interviews took place for this role however the offered roles were declined. The interview process for this position will start again. PDS has 4 new permit specialists currently in training but the backlog is moving down.
- Urban Design – **Handout 1**
 - Steve Antupit from PDS Permit Design Studio to provide an update on work that has been ongoing. There is a new land use permit project. This is related only to downtown and X districts and only on larger projects in those areas. Steve Antupit plans to send TPAG a visual aid. Justin requested that this be sent to architects, land use planners, and if you're brave engineers. Clinton Brink heard amenities plan exceptions will be included in this. Steve Antupit agreed and advised that this is not a part of Home In Tacoma (HIT). There is a reduction in the amenity space that can be included, but the amenity list has been included. In HIT memo sent to the

planning commission Clinton Brink noted that the parking exemption was going away for units that are 450 sq ft or larger. Steve Antupit advised he couldn't speak on that if it is part of HIT, but that it is not included in this package. Clinton Brink asked if he's considering anything regarding pedestrian access. Steve Antupit advised no code changes in this package this is for building and site standards. If site conditions are such that you would ask for a variance, then it would depart from this package. If it is a small project again it is not part of this package. Medium projects are approved administratively. Ben asked if large projects are required to go through a design review. Steve Antupit clarifies this project is only for the design variance. Clinton asked if there is a public draft for this available. Steve Antupit informs members to look at the website [Urban Design Program](#).

- Design Manual- **PowerPoint 1**
 - Chris Johnson explains that based on the feedback from the last five years, PDS is trying to provide clarity as the manual hasn't been updated since 2016 and before that had not been updated since 2003. There are still things that need to be added to the manual. The goal is to make this a living document that staff can update as needed, so next year when we do the annual update it makes things more efficient.
 - The chapter that has received the most attention at this time is chapter 4, which is street design, as city staff believed that this needed the most work. We are holding off on chapter 8 – Pedestrian Facilities until the DOT updates its manual.
 - The new tree policy is in place and will impact Chapter 9 - Tree and Vegetation Management. Chris Johnson will send examples of the changes. Chapter 11 is mostly changes to language and nothing significant will be changed. Chapter 12 - Tacoma Water updated how they design the water system and they are waiting for us to finish the manual to finalize those changes.
 - The interdepartmental update team is as follows:
 - Update leads Chapter 2, 3, 4, 8
 - Public Works Transportation, Breannan Kidd
 - Public Works Engineering, Brian Wang
 - Planning and Development Services, Chris Johnson
 - Public Works ADA Coordinator, Gail Himes
 - Chapter 9
 - OEPS Urban Forestry, Mike Carey
 - Chapter 11
 - Planning and Development Services Stormwater, Mieke Hoppin,
 - Chapter 12
 - Tacoma Public Utilities Water, Ali Poldá
 - Chris Johnson explains the a small team has spent about a year working on chapter 4. It has been distributed to a Subject Matter Expert (staff) since December of 2023 to work on. It has been returned to us to finalize and the due date is January of 2025. For stakeholders, we will have a version of it available sooner than the due date, approximately August of 2024. This is a tight window but at this stage we are on schedule. We will still need to do some standard detail updates, but this may be

a different process to follow. We would be hoping to start the stakeholder feedback after July 30th and with time until September/October for last-minute updates.

- Chapter 2 speaks to permitting requirements. Staff have added things that clarify half-street improvements. The biggest hitter is the variance process. Staff have been mandated by the Public Works director to have deviations from the standards tracked and a list of those deviations. Chris Johnson advised he will be judicious in these conversations as policies need to be updated based on frequent variances for the same standard. Staff is trying to get the ROW restoration policy added, into the Design Manual, as well.
- Chapter 3 will apply to the TPAG group with potential for required plan format changes in the future. Staff have changed the chapter 4 structure significantly. They looked at other jurisdictions including the City of Auburn and are trying to bring all of this together in an understandable format. One big change is, staff modified the design speed, so it is less conservative but more safetycentric. There has been a large amount of information added about curves and bulb-outs. Pavement design and restoration will be more detailed in the manual, as well.
- Chris Johnson will give more details and will ask for opinions on what needs to be changed when he sends this out. This is a big effort for the staff, as Chapter 4 of the manual went from 40 pages to 72 pages. Ben Ferguson recommends that it might be worthwhile to reach out to other civills in Tacoma to give feedback. Justin Goroch recommends that we use the same group used for the off-site discussion and if anyone in the room is up to it they should join that group. Ben Ferguson advised he is willing to facilitate this. Ben Ferguson applauds that the city is making something difficult to understand, clearer. Chris Johnson advised we are trying to clarify sidewalk widths and make them more predictable. Clinton Brink advised that we should be careful adding codes from other parts of the city as we are trying to eliminate ambiguity around sidewalks. Clinton Brink asked if this is more of a lateral move. Chris Johnson advised that this is to help with staff concerns the lack of transparency and staff is hoping to eliminate having to speak with someone to discuss the requirements, but the rules will not be more strict. Clarity not changes to the requirements.
- Clinton Brink asked if the new tree policy is in place, and asked if it is just the street tree policy. Chris Johnson confirmed just the street tree policy is in place. Conflict trees will have a cost associated with removing them based on the size of the tree, or the developer can plant comparable tree(s). Ryan Babbit asked if there will be an arborist on city staff. Chris Johnson advised yes. Ryan Babbit asked why we don't use a third party, as it could eliminate a backlog or administrative delays due to sick calls, vacations, etc. Clinton Brink advised that it could be a waste of resources to hire an arborist. Ben Ferguson advised a high level of worry is that if there is only one person to reach out to there could be an issue overcoming obstacles. Chris Johnson advised Corey Newton was adamant that the arborist we hire is there to help the customer get to yes and not only their interest in the trees. Mike Carry's group has offered to help with the transition. Brett Johnson said that potentially using a tree that was cut down in the building material could create an offset. Chris Johnson advised to reach out to Mike Carry and Beth Jarott at this stage.

- Ryan Babbit asked if transportation has looked at the street design aspect of the design manual. Chris Johnson advised we have had some of the best people in our transportation group as part of the discussion. The city has an entire transportation commission that they work with to bring ideas into the manual. Justin Goroch advised he agrees with what Ben Ferguson said, but asked how the private streets and roads with easements on them have standards. Chris Johnson advised those standards will be in the manual. Ben Ferguson asked if shared walkways and driveways (Woonerf) were included Ben Ferguson advised there would be a huge benefit to stacking these together. We would like to allow a car into the driveway and a pedestrian to the door in a safe way. Justin Goroch advised this will be more common in plats of 23 and over.

Justin Goroch added recently when it comes to land-use permits he is seeing the city staff not giving the applicant or developer a chance to look at it beforehand and if there is a condition that is tough you have to appeal it. He wanted to give a heads-up. Clinton Brink added that this is a problem as it causes too many delays as it could have been a conversation beforehand.

3:08 PM Co-Chair Interest

Ben Ferguson advised that we should lay out the responsibilities of the co-chair other than just attending meetings. He would like to recommend that anyone who is a co-chair has to attend in person. Ben Ferguson asked if Mike Fast had any problems Mike Fast responded that virtual attendance hasn't been a problem so far, as we have never been in a situation where we haven't had someone to chair the meeting. Ben Ferguson also advised he is willing to step back if that would be beneficial to the group.

- Ben Ferguson is interested
- Clinton Brink is interested
- Michael R. Fast is interested

Chris Johnson will be providing a draft of by-laws for the group to review, edit, and vote on.

3: 14PM Future Agenda Topics

Current future agenda topic from 2023

- *Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations Subcommittee*
- Process alignment: Commercial vs. Residential permit requirements
- TPAG Mission Statement
- E-permits
- Pedestrian/Emergency Access DADU's
- Long Range Planning – update from city staff
- Capital Bond Projects
- Solid Waste Collection & Development Projects
- Urban Design (Stephen Antupit)

New Agenda Items To Add (Draft for 2024)

- Permitting process review that will be completed on a set month (April/May?)
- Fix Zone C-2 Currently you can build nothing because of parking requirements

- Reconsider parking requirements. Our code is from 1953? We are in a very different place and taking a fresh look would be good
- Soften threshold requirements for residential
- Alley's vs Courts
- Electrical permits are 30 weeks out with TPU for residential (Engineers are backed up)
- Tacoma Water (Permit Timelines)
- Still pay attention to home in Tacoma as it progresses
- It could be beneficial to have a complaint box
- Does the city allow building permits before the final plat is approved?

3:30 PM Final Comments

Send any additional new agenda ideas to permitadvisorygroup@cityoftacoma.org.

3:32 PM Adjourn