

Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Hybrid meeting

Meeting #55 May 17th, 2024 2:00pm

Advisory Group Members in attendance: Layne Alfonso, Clinton Brink, Michael R. Fast, Jason Gano, Justin Goroch, Loundyne Hare, Claude Remy, Gomer Roseman

Excused: Ben Ferguson, Robert Laing

Absent:

2:03 PM Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Justin Goroch.

2:06 PM Approval of Minutes

Meeting #54: Clinton Brink moved. Layne Alfonso seconded. No discussion or objection. Motion approved.

2:08 PM Public Comment

No public comments were provided at this time.

2:10 PM Quick updates: City staff new items of interest

- Administrative updates
 - PDS land use division manager, Jana Magoon will be retiring in June, and thanks TPAG for all their hard work over the years. Shirley Schultz will be the interim division manager and then backfill recruitment will begin.
 - Deputy City Manager Kurtis Kingsolver is retiring in June.
 - Environmental Services Director Mike Slevin is retiring in June. Corey Newton will confirm a PW representative will attend future TPAG meetings.
 - 4 new permit specialists starting this month. Patience is requested as staff is behind and training new employees has begun.
 - Site and Building has hired an Engineering office Coordinator. This position will serve as in-office communication to field workers in the construction group and site review.
 - Level of service(LOS) should hopefully start to catch up.
 - Traffic division has open positions. They interviewed and extended two job offers and unfortunately were turned down by both applicants. Reassessing applications and recruitment will start again.
- TPAG Recruitment.- With Jim Dugan resigning TPAG needs to prioritize assigning a new chair and co-chair. Once this decision has been made by TPAG members city staff will submit a memo to the City Manager for appointment.
- Design Manual- At the upcoming TPAG meeting Chris Johnson will present what his group has been working on. The goal is to have implantation at the beginning of the new year.

- June's TPAG meeting moved to June 18th, 2024 as the City will be closed in observance of Juneteenth on June 19th, 2024.

2:16 PM Subcommittee reports

- Outreach & Recruitment – need a new lead
 - Please let leadership know if you are interested in becoming the lead on this subcommittee.
- Impact Fees – need a new lead
 - Please let leadership know if you are interested in becoming the lead on this subcommittee.
- Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations – Justin Goroch
 - Next month, discussion on this topic for July and August.
- Unit Lot Subdivision - Justin Goroch
 - The draft code is out and will be discussed next month.

Jason Gano asks if impact fees and sidewalk subcommittees should be combined. Chris Johnson replies it is up to the committee however the sidewalks subcommittee focus is on an in-lieu of the program for a damaged sidewalk instead of paying for the whole standard new sidewalk. It is a reasonable way to get out of spending money on sidewalks to nowhere. Justin Goroch adds that the fee in lieu should be kept separate from impact fees. Clinton Brink would like an update on sidewalk policies. Chris Johnson will work up a document based on the previous discussion. He explains that this document will be a proposal for TPAG to move forward with a recommendation to the city council and up to them if they move want to proceed with the recommendation.

Layne Alfonso would like Public Works to replace Kurtis with a representative from PW to attend the monthly TPAG meeting. City leadership should be in attendance to be able to answer or influence change. If there are individuals here then no wasting time and TPAG can focus on the permit process. Chris Johnson agrees that the sidewalks discussion would benefit from having PW here. Justin Goroch agrees it is important to have the appropriate staff at the leadership level for the topic being discussed.

2:25 PM Process alignment: Commercial vs. Residential permit requirements

Justin Goroch opens the floor for follow-up questions or discussion after last month's meeting on process alignment.

Gomer Roseman's impression was that some of the quirks with SDEV and WO are because of Accela. He hates Accela and feels it is not an intuitive program. Chris Johnson explains that city staff continues to focus on the customer experience and we could still do a better job of making it user-friendly from the applicant's perspective. Maybe there is more we can do with help and training. Chris Johnson informs members that the city has heard this complaint before from clients using Accela and often are able to help the customer. Clinton Brink feels like any system is going to have its problems. Accela is not perfect but there is not a better alternative in other jurisdictions that he has noted.

Chris Johnson explains a continuous improvement group did a trial run through the SDEV permit and realized that the city needs to look at the customer's experience. Mike Fast reports he is all for making a recommendation for Accela. Anyone who is not used to using the program is not going to be able to find

things easily. Chris Johnson stated the more we hear your point of view on what isn't work the better for us. Some things can be changed to make it more helpful.

Jason Gano requested to have the code digitized.

Mike Fast requests that instead of showing all offered inspection types only show inspections that are required for that specific project. Chris Johnson agrees and this has been a topic with Corey Newton and with changes in inspection management.

Justin Goroch adds that for problems and troubleshooting the city could provide video or informational documents that could be helpful for the user experience.

Mike Fast inquires if over-the-counter(OTC) permitting was brought up at the last meeting. Justin Goroch explains some residential can be done OTC and that Craig's group is working towards increasing OTC permits. Mike Fast adds that for simple permits this will save time and increase LOS. Streamline processes work best.

Jason Gano would like to know if this can be applied to demolition permits. Mike Fast explains that the city had e-permits that did not require staff review but there were hiccups when scheduling inspections in advance so were discontinued. They need to adjust and bring e-permits back. Justin Goroch reiterates that TPAG would like to see e-permits and OTC residential permits.

Mike Fast feels inspection times should not be an all-day window. It would be helpful to have a morning or afternoon option.

Justin Goroch reflects on the previous discussion that when SDEV and WO were combined and is not going as smoothly as hoped. Chris Johnson explains that permitting on the review side makes sense to do them together SDEV/WO but it would be beneficial to have a mechanism to phase permits so that WO is not holding up the entire permit. Mike Fast agrees. Justin Goroch explains projects need to be able to move forward with SDEV to be able to turn dirt. For larger projects, SDEV is most important to get the project started. It is not the most efficient because comments are in all these different permits. That is a risk but preferably submit all at once and then have phased permitting.

Chris Johnson states that having checklists and guidelines be more clear for residential and for commercial permits is a goal. Clinton Brink states if you have a checklist make sure they are kept updated.

Chris Johnson brings up the idea of requiring documents to be submitted in a specific format to keep it consistent and to streamline the process. Clinton Brink agrees that this seems easier to have it standardized. Layne Alfonso adds if it is easier for the city then it is going to be easier for the clients. Justin Goroch states professionals might prefer this and others might have different opinions.

Chris Johnson encourages this to be an annual general permit discussion. This will be discussed at the leadership meeting.

2:51 PM OPMA/Bylaws: Chair and Co-Chair

Chief Deputy City Attorney, Steve Victor is here to answer questions and discuss OPMA/Bylaws. Steve Victor opens up the discussion to TPAG members to hear what concerns or interests they have.

Clinton Brink asks for clarification on subcommittees. Do subcommittee meetings need to be public or not? If no final decision is being made on behalf of the group and a quorum was not met, do they need to be public?

Steve Victor answers that under State law TPAG is not required to follow OPMA because TPAG members are not a governing body and do not make final decisions so it would be fine however, City Council asks

that we conduct our business as if we need to abide by the OPMA. For example, would you be okay with some of the city council talking about our options so all members do not have a chance to review the full picture? No, so that's a problem. This is why it is a case-by-case so general guidance is it's best to always have a public meeting.

Clinton Brink clarifies if TPAG members can work and discuss things on the side outside of TPAG? Steve Victor would not recommend it because even though not subject to OPMA the group is subject to public records and that includes everything or anything that is done by a CBC. If requested we must produce records. At the city level, it is easy to look through records and files to combine. However, CBC searching through members and asking for this to be provided by members is not realistic. Should the topic even be discussed outside of the meeting? Case by case basis. Try to simulate OPMA guidelines.

Clinton Brink asks if subcommittees need to be public. Steve Victor would like clarification on how they work. Justin Goroch explains that members of the committee bring a concern at large to the group then volunteers go and gather information and bring it back to the group for recommendations. Steve Victor responded that if the information is shared or discussed no, if making any decisions then OPMA issue.

Layne Alfonso clarifies that subcommittees do talk separately but then they walk through the subcommittee discussion at the public meeting. Have guidance on what happens at the subcommittee meetings but no final decisions are made. Steve Victor suggests not to call it a subcommittee. Workgroup? Study group?

Clinton Brink makes clear that talking outside of the meetings happens. We work in the same field and with many individuals. Justin Goroch adds that when writing a recommendation that is several pages long, how can we make that a working function within this group? This is impossible to do all in the monthly public meetings.

Jason Gano inquires if all back-and-forth emails are all cc'd with TPAG email so it is tied to the city system, would this help? Steve Victor agrees running all communications through staff is a good idea. Justin Goroch clarifies that any formal letter of recommendation needs to CC TPAG.

Chris Johnson explains that TPAG should discuss what bylaws they want to guide meetings by. For example laws on subcommittees, backup chairs? how many co-chairs? Then we can have bylaws and conduct the main topic discussions at the leadership level.

Cliton Brink makes the recommended motion for Justin Goroch to be chair. Layne Alfonso seconded this motion and no further discussion. Chris Johnson reminds members this decision will now be a recommendation to the city manager and we will let staff know when the motion is approved.

Chris Johnson highlights that part of the ordinance is to have a variety of demographics represented in this group. One priority goal that needs to be decided on by the group is whether it is important to get people on the panel or to focus on demographic representation in the next recruitment cycle. Ben Ferguson mentioned prioritizing demographics with the next recruitment cycle.

Justin Goroch expresses that with all the changes to TPAG members and leadership, it is encouraged for everyone to actively participate. Ask questions learn and contribute to the group discussions as a whole. More robust and more impactful when it is all voices. Layne Alfonso adds it is great to have members In person when possible. Encourages this as it helps with the conversation.

3:29 PM **Final Comments**

3:29 PM **Future Agenda Topics** (Not Discussed- Due to time limitations)

- *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)

3:29 PM

Adjourn