

MEMORANDUM

TO: Lisa Anderson-Ogilvie
FROM: Ron Eachus
RE: April 18 Planning Commission Agenda and Materials

You asked if we wanted to provide any written materials for the April 18 work session. This communication is my suggestion on the agenda and what I believe the work session should try to accomplish.

It is my hope that the agenda for the work session focuses on our advisory role in a way that helps us establish priorities for application of that role and how we might subsequently organize our meeting times and agenda in pursuit of those priorities.

When I asked the chair if we could postpone a vote on changing the bylaws to eliminate the requirement that the Planning Commission meet at least once a month, I did so because I felt before we considered such a change we needed to have a discussion about our approach to our advisory role.

The context of the proposed bylaw change was that we had violated the bylaws because we had some months when we did not meet due to the fact we had no agenda items forwarded to us in the land use process. In other months we met only once a month.

The pattern has been that we have cancelled meetings when there was nothing on the agenda. Before we eliminated the once a month meeting requirement I felt we needed to explore what we might do when there is no specific land use or code related item on the agenda. Rather than canceling a meeting, would it be better to use that time to target issues we want to pursue in our advisory role?

My specific concern was that we could be using that time to further our advisory role and to explore issues members had been raising as we responded to the normal agenda items. I believe that advisory role is an important element of the Planning Commissions duties. When I applied for the appointment I stated that the Commission's "primary role is one of advising the Council."

In response to the question about my understanding of the role of the Commission I wrote that "The Commissions responsibilities may be related to specific actions requested by an applicant or the provision of a larger, longer-term view that guides and governs decisions on those requests. At times it may require evidentiary hearings, including public hearings, while at other times it may involve a longer process and broader outreach for community involvement..."

"Essentially the role of the Planning Commission is to provide the council with a recommendation and an analysis of the issues at hand and the factors supporting any recommendation. It is a community participation filter through which a wide and comprehensive array of land use factors and community values pass to better inform the City Council as it carries out its duties."

Under the City code our advisory role is broad. It includes:

- Parking, layout and location of streets and sidewalks
- Relief of traffic congestion,
- Betterment of housing and sanitation conditions
- Conditions and establishment of zones and districts
- Plans for regulation of the future growth development and beautification
- Recommend plans for industrial and economic needs of the community
- Study needs of local industries to strengthen and stabilize employment conditions

In addition, the SRC states our responsibilities as “In general, study and propose such measures as may be advisable for the promotion of the public interest, health, morals, safety, comfort, convenience, and welfare of the City...”

Needless to say, that’s pretty broad.

We can take two approaches to such a broad advisory role. One is that we sit back and take up what comes our way from the land use process, the Council and the planning department. The other is that we exercise our advisory function by determining to tackle issues we believe are important, but which need further study and evaluation with an eye toward providing advice and making recommendations to the Council. This isn’t meant to imply that we tackle everything on the lengthy list of advisory responsibilities. Only that we consider what our advisory role might be, what we’d like to prioritize and how we organize it.

I would hope that we would use the April 18 work session to focus on our advisory role and to accomplish the following:

1. Review our advisory role and how we see it impacting our work

2. Determine the issues on which the Commission would like to focus in its advisory role. A number of issues have come up in member questions and discussions already, such as:

- How to monitor, advance and follow the development of affordable housing and the effect incentives are having on our housing goals
- Review of the Salem Transportation Plan and how we can create a better interconnection between the STP, the development code and other objectives.
- What changes in policy and code would encourage the use of solar design principles and encourage solar energy
- How can we advance design consideration of certain amenities such as EV chargers, more open space and adequate community space

3. How do we organize our advisory role and what is the impact on staff and on our schedule

This involves the expectation of the staff’s role and the impact our advisory role priorities on the schedule and the use of meeting time when we would otherwise have no agenda items.