

Meeting Agenda of the City and Borough of Juneau
Title 49 Committee of the Planning Commission

Thursday, October 29, 2020
Community Development Department
Virtual & Telephonic Meeting

Members Present: Nathaniel Dye, Erik Pedersen, Travis Arndt, Weston Eiler

Members Absent: Joshua Winchell

Commissioners Present: Paul Voelckers and Ken Alper

Staff Present: Jill Maclean (CDD Director), Alexandra Pierce (CDD Planning Manager), Irene Gallion (CDD Senior Planner), Laurel Christian (CDD Planner), Joseph Meyers (CDD Planner)

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 P.M.

II. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: *Mr. Dye asked for changes to the agenda, none were requested.*

The motion passed with no objection

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Draft Minutes October 8, 2020 Title 49 Committee Meeting

MOTION: *by Mr. Arndt to approve the October 8, 2020 minutes with minor edits made by staff.*

The motion passed with no objection.

IV. Agenda Topics

A. Downtown Juneau Parking

Ms. Gallion presented the memo provided to the Committee and recommended discussing the options in the memo. She asked if there were any options in the memo that the Committee did not wish to consider.

Mr. Arndt replied that he does not want to eliminate Fee-in-lieu of parking (FIL), but would be interested in discussing it. He also added that he is not inclined to eliminate parking minimums for downtown for residential or mixed use developments due to on-street parking constraints.

Ms. Gallion stated that there is a code provision for allowing shared parking and asked if it was adequate.

Mr. Arndt stated developments may not know they can pair up with each other for shared parking. He recommended a "parking bank" where developers can volunteer to allow shared parking and make that parking public.

Ms. Gallion questioned if this was completely regulatory, or if there would be management associated with it.

Mr. Voelckers expressed interest in allowing parking waivers in PD1 and PD2 parking districts and keeping FIL with different requirements. He also suggested eliminating PD1 and PD2 and allowing parking waivers downtown.

Mr. Dye stated parking waivers were intended to replace parking variances and asked what the differences in criteria are.

Ms. Maclean stated the code does not prohibit applying for a variance to parking. She noted they have different approval criteria and the variance approval criteria are tighter. Waivers run with the use; variances run with the land.

Mr. Dye asked if the variance code does not prohibit applications for variances to parking.

Ms. Maclean said the code allows it.

Mr. Voelckers stated that variances are not for economic hardship, so it must be for a unique feature of the site. In the downtown core, it is difficult to find a geometry based variance.

Mr. Dye agreed that variances were too difficult for parking, so waivers were created.

Mr. Pedersen stated that, in his perspective, making no changes to the code is not an option based on the Assembly's direction.

Mr. Voelckers agreed.

Mr. Arndt questioned what the Assembly's direction was and how the Assembly envisioned the path forward. He asked if there is a specific problem the Committee is trying to solve.

Ms. Maclean replied that the Assembly has seen that providing parking downtown is a challenge to development and it is stopping development. Staff can bring forward options to the Committee and the Committee needs to make recommendations to the Assembly. The Assembly needs the Committee to review options to solve the development challenges downtown faces. The goal is to remove any obstacles to development that are within control of the Land Use Code.

Mr. Arndt questioned this and wasn't sure what the Assembly wanted to see, because there are so many variables. He noted that on-street parking is an issue and that off-street parking hinders development, but there needs to be a balance. He doesn't want to fix the number of spots; if FIL is the issue, they should focus on that.

Mr. Eiler echoed Ms. Maclean and stated the Assembly operates at a high level and is not as familiar with all of the specifics to parking and Title 49. He stated that the Committee needs to respect the diversity and differences in downtown from other geographic areas. He thought the Assembly would appreciate the Committee coming up with the specific proposals. Mr. Eiler wanted to consolidate the PD1 and PD2 parking districts and questioned the parking ratios. He agreed that downtown is significantly different and needs separate requirements.

Ms. Pierce agreed with Mr. Eiler's points. She stated that the Assembly was looking at high-level points for parking downtown. The Assembly sees inequity in development and parking downtown; they see FIL as unreasonable. There is also a concern for available spaces and managing workforce parking. When looking at the development side, the Committee needs to review how current regulations negatively impact new development downtown and then come up with a strategy for addressing the regulations. Lastly, the Committee can have a discussion about parking management, but that authority lies largely with the Parks and Recreation Department.

Mr. Alper generally agreed that the parking code requires too much parking across the board. He also agrees with having parking districts downtown. Mr. Alper felt that some types of development may be okay with no parking, but other types of development need parking, such as residential and the numbers need to be reasonable. He also questioned the long-term needs for parking, if autonomous vehicles are a thing of the future.

Mr. Dye replied that parking is interesting, because there are many differences in opinions. He disagrees that residential workforce housing may need parking. He stated that when parking requirements are changed, parking management would need to be discussed.

Mr. Arndt recommended no parking requirements downtown, changing to 1-hour, on-street parking downtown, instead of 2-hour, on-street parking, and CBJ finds a lot off-site with busses running a loop between the parking lot and locations downtown.

Mr. Dye doesn't think that this would be practical to enforce through Title 49. The requirements may be, but not the circulator portion.

Mr. Arndt replied that there could be a fee required for utilizing the service that could live in Title 49. Operations would not be Title 49.

Ms. Pierce stated that there has been a downtown circulator concept discussed a lot in plans for downtown. There are mixed feelings from the community on what need the circulator would fill. She said that it is largely a management issue. Mr. Arndt's concept is still a FIL concept; it's just buying into something different.

Mr. Voelckers replied that the purview of Title 49 can be a bit more casual since the Assembly is looking for ideas and there will be a holistic solution that the Committee needs to look at. The Committee should look at how the items work together. He agreed with Mr. Eiler, and believes eliminating parking, or reducing parking requirements for types of developments, are reasonable paths forward. However, if the Committee tries to go down that path, there will be management issues. Mr. Voelckers felt the Committee should look at other land-constrained communities as examples.

Mr. Eiler suggested a half step to solve issues now rather than long-term solutions. He is not sure the Committee can tackle all of the parking issues in one swoop and he wants to use immediate levers to alleviate pressures. Management may be connected to Title 49, but management is more of a planning for area plans exercise. Near-term discussion should start at why Juneau has the parking districts where they are located, why the percentages are what they are, and should FIL continue to exist. The Committee could change those and make broader recommendations to the Assembly.

Mr. Arndt asked if Parks and Recreation or the Police Department has number of spaces versus number of spaces filled and how the existing parking is being used in terms of hours. Are there specific areas the Committee needs to tweak rather than the numbers?

Ms. Maclean replied that the Parks and Recreation director was not able to join the meeting. Staff can look into the numbers and provide them back to the Committee at a later date.

Ms. Gallion replied that there was a 2-year study included in the previous packet and it could be a starting point to look at. This was in addition to the parking management plan.

Mr. Voelckers said working incrementally may work, but he is stuck on the Archipelago development as an example. The development stopped immediately. There is no incremental adjustment that would have worked for that development. He's not sure if the Committee can solve it incrementally, if that doesn't work for large developments that are being stalled.

Ms. Maclean responded that she likes the idea of using waivers in the PD1 and PD2 parking districts with different criteria. She said she found Juneau is different from many parts of the country and waivers could be

tailored for specific uses. She recommended that developers prove what the real need for parking is, and the spaces could be waived down to that number. It puts some burden on the developer to prove their parking need, but it may pay off in the end.

Mr. Dye responded that parking drives development. Developers need to know what the parking requirements are before site development. If parking waivers have some criteria where there is a proof of need, this could also stop development because of uncertainty.

Mr. Voelckers agreed with Ms. Maclean's instinct to work on waiver flexibility. It creates a front-end uncertainty for development, but there may not be a way around it. The developer needs to do their homework and come up with a credible proposal. Parking waivers may need to come to the commission earlier. This could allow for assurances before they develop their entire site plan and determine if it was feasible. He agreed that a waiver process is critical.

Ms. Pierce agreed with Mr. Voelckers. Part of the challenge with current parking requirements is that they are one size fits all. If the developer can lay out the characteristics of a development, it may be more of a burden, but if we have clear guidelines in place, developers will understand what the requirement may or may not be early on. Different criteria for different types of development is important.

Ms. Maclean asked the Committee what options should be explored further.

Mr. Voelckers recommended allowing parking waivers downtown.

Mr. Arndt recommended the Committee get the parking waiver moving quickly while they try to determine if changes should be made to other variables such as ratios or FIL. The two step process creates the opportunity for a relief valve quickly.

Mr. Dye agreed with Mr. Arndt. He also recommended eliminating the parking districts if parking waivers are allowed. Instead, he felt the Committee should encourage waivers.

Mr. Voelckers replied that the Assembly has increased the parking district areas, and agrees that they are not needed.

Mr. Arndt replied that parking districts as they are might solve the problem without needing a waiver. So, they should stay, since it is a degree of certainty.

Mr. Dye asked the Committee if they wanted to have one parking district instead of two parking districts.

Ms. Gallion replied she could come back with more information on why parking districts are the way they are.

Mr. Eiler replied that waivers can be a tool. He wanted to have parking requirements and a waiver process with a high threshold that is reviewed early. He agreed the parking districts should exist, so there is a built-in reduction in parking requirements that is understood. Mr. Eiler doesn't think waivers should be too readily available, and there needs to be some innovation, since there is a need for parking downtown, but realizing there are spatial limits. He would like to know the historical background for the parking districts, but wants waivers to be narrowly tailored.

Mr. Pedersen responded that he is in support of a modified and blended PD1 and PD2, merged into one zone that allows for some reduction. He is also in support of FIL to give another option and allowing waivers in the new parking district.

Ms. Maclean asked if the Committee was interested in a sliding scale for residential development. Residential would be a percentage, mixed use is another percentage, and commercial is a different percentage. It would be a way to incentivize residential and mixed use development that is a goal in community plans.

Mr. Dye agreed with the concept within one parking district and a sliding scale for development.

Mr. Arndt also agreed, but thought the Committee should focus on immediately crafting waiver language in the meantime.

Mr. Voelckers agreed with Mr. Arndt. He believes a waiver process tailored to the uses is needed, and this needs to be carefully crafted language. For housing specifically, the waiver process is critical.

Mr. Dye asked what more direction was needed.

Ms. Gallion recapped that she will work on waiver language and may present strategies on different uses. She will research the history of parking districts and that Fil will stay in place.

Mr. Dye asked if the Committee could get the cost of construction of parking spaces. He is not in favor of eliminating FIL. He is curious how the number relates to what can reasonably be built with the fee.

Ms. Pierce replied that the cost of structured parking is \$50,000 per space, according to CBJ Engineering and Public Works. Mr. Voelckers agreed and thinks FIL is a bargain compared to constructing a parking structure.

Ms. Gallion asked the Committee what type of public comment they would like to see, and if a public meeting should be held or only Title 49 meetings.

Mr. Dye stated it was dependent on how the Committee moves forward. If a quick fix on parking waivers is made, the Planning Commission review and public process associated with that might be adequate. For the longer-term larger concepts, what would CDD recommend?

Ms. Maclean recommending touching back on this in a few weeks depending on the information gathered for the next meeting.

V. Committee Member Comments and Questions

The next meeting is set for November 24, 2020 at 12 P.M.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:16 P.M.