

**CITY OF BLAINE
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Thursday, December 1, 2016
7:00 PM
Van Tabb - Chair**

A. CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM

B. ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Calvin Armerding, Ken Ely, Van Tabb, Richard May, Kevin Owens, John LeBrun, Sue Sturgill

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Community Development Director, Michael Jones
Community Planner I, Madeline Ottley

C. AUDIENCE COMMENTS: None

D. PUBLIC HEARING:

COMMISSIONER TABB READ THE RULES FOR A PUBLIC HEARING.

1. Wharf District Master Plan Update – Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Mr. Wenger presented the staff report, detailing the proposed amendments to the Mariner Village/Planning Area 3 within the Comprehensive Plan/Wharf District Master Plan.

The proposed amendments include increase in the area of the maximum allowable height limit of 55 feet, and allowance of water related uses within the Mariner Village/Planning Area 3.

Mr. Wenger highlighted the purpose of the Wharf Zoning District and how the proposed amendment complies with Blaine Municipal Code requirements.

Staff recommends approval of the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Amendment/Wharf District Master Plan.

Commissioner Sturgill asked about the development of possible warehouses with the proposed amendment.

Sylvia Goodwin, Applicant and Port of Bellingham Planning Director – Ms. Goodwin stated that she worked on the initial Wharf District Master Plan in conjunction with City in 2007, and at the time was optimistic about the possibility of business overflow from the downtown core into the Wharf District. Since that time the economy has changed and anticipated development has not occurred, leaving many buildings downtown vacant. Ms.

Goodwin highlighted that space for development within with industrial area of the Wharf District is limited due to planned expansions from existing companies and parking requirements. Ms. Goodwin recommended approval of the proposed amendment, and stated all three Port District Commissioners approved submittal of the proposed amendment.

Sundance Yacht Company, 199 Marine Drive, Cofounder Rick Buck – Mr. Buck stated that Sundance Yachts is interested in moving their corporate headquarters from Portland to Blaine and expanding the building they are currently leasing Mariner Village/Planning Area 3. Their proposed business activities include retail sale, storage, and servicing of yachts. In addition, the development could feature other amenities like the club house at their Portland location; includes pool and other services. Mr. Buck stated a significant amount of property cleanup has occurred since they started leasing the space, which includes new exterior siding.

Shael Wilder, 2057 Bayview Avenue – Mr. Wilder expressed his concern for the proposed amendment, specifically allowance of water related uses and building height increase. Mr. Wilder stated that the city of Blaine has great views, and was concerned about development that would affect the view in a negative way. Mr. Wilder was concerned about allowance of water related uses in the Mariner Village and its impact on the original idea of mixed use development. Mr. Wilder stated that the City was still in the middle of the Beckwith economic initiative, and the Planning Commission should take a long term view on the proposed amendments and wait for the results of the initiative before approving the proposed amendment.

Pat Grubb, 225 Marine Drive, owner of Northern Light building – Mr. Grubb stated his opposition to the proposed amendment. Mr. Grubb added that the Port has not fulfilled their portion of the implementation plan cited in the Wharf District Master Plan, and stated that the proposed allowed use is not the best or highest use for Mariner Village. Mr. Grubb also cited long lease agreements between business owners and the Port as an obstacle to realization of the mixed use development concept for Mariner Village if water related uses were to be allowed. Mr. Grubb also expressed concern for loss of views from Peace Portal Drive and questioned if the application meets the criteria for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Mr. Grubb concluded stating that he believes the proposed amendment to be spot zoning and the Planning Commission should recommend denial of the proposed amendment.

Naomi Knowlton, 2067 Bayview Avenue – Ms. Knowlton stated that she has been a Blaine resident 26 years and agrees with Mr. Wilder and Mr. Grubb. Ms. Nolton stated that if an Amtrak Station was to be developed in Blaine, views of the harbor and Canada would be blocked by unsightly water related uses if the proposed amendment is approved. Ms. Nolton added that one of Blaine's greatest assets is its views, and cited how other municipalities use planning regulations to protect their own views. Ms. Nolton questioned if there was other land available within the Wharf District for Sundance, and urged the Planning Commission to recommend denial of the proposed amendment.

Sundance Yacht, Nick Buck – Mr. Nick Buck stated that Sundance Yachts has no desire to diminish the aesthetic quality of the water front, and Sundance would work closely with the City and Port to comply with required design standards if they were able to expand their facilities. Mr. Buck also stated that expansion of their facilities would result in increased business activities within the Wharf District and downtown area.

Commissioner May inquired about the types of jobs that would be created by the Sundance Yacht expansion.

Mr. Rick Buck responded, stating that Sundance would employ approximately 25 well paid persons with various duties like sales, service, and management.

Commissioner May inquired about the aesthetics of the proposed building, and height necessity for operation.

Mr. Rick Buck responded that in order to generate the necessary revenue for operation, the building would need to exceed the current allowed height limit within Mariner Village/Planning Area 3.

Commissioner Ely asked for clarification on available property within the industrial area of the Wharf District.

Ms. Goodwin responded, stating that during peak crab and fish processing season the parking areas are full, and several existing businesses located within the industrial area plan on expanding their facilities. In addition, boat launching facilities within the area would not satisfy the needs of Sundance Yachts.

Commissioner Ely requested more information from the applicant on the amount of available space within the industrial area.

Ms. Goodwin responded, stating that she can submit lease boundary information to the Planning Commission regarding those businesses within the industrial area.

The Planning Commission and applicant then had a discussion regarding available space and facilities within the Wharf District.

Commissioner Owens inquired about the proposed plans for Sundance Yachts.

Ms. Goodwin responded, stating that while no formal plans have been created yet the amendment is necessary for the proposed expansion of the facility.

Mr. Wenger also responded stating that all new development would be subject to architectural design standards, which the Planning Commission would have an opportunity to comment on.

Commissioner Ely asked for clarification on Sundance Yachts business model.

Mr. Rick Buck responded, stating that the majority of customers would be visiting from out of town, the majority of which would be Canadian. Mr. Buck stated that approximately half of the boats in the port belong to Canadian citizens, and Blaine is located in a very desirable area since it is in-between Vancouver and Seattle. Mr. Buck added that Sundance Yachts is proposing to offer sales, storage, and servicing of vessels, the majority of which are 15 to 25 feet in length, as well as a club house and boat launching accommodations which would create a destination for customers.

Commissioner Ely asked Sundance Yachts if they believe there is a way to accommodate their business within the Wharf District without having to make an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Rick Buck responded, stating that he did not believe so because of the proposed size the facility which is needed to generate revenue, which cannot be accommodated within the industrial area of the Wharf District. Mr. Buck also stated that the development would be around a nine million dollar project, and they are planning on creating an aesthetically pleasing facility which is necessary for yacht sales.

Commissioner Owens inquired about the type of development that has occurred around their other facilities.

Mr. Rick Buck responded, stating that at their Portland facility a 180 unit condominium was developed on the adjoining property.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER MAY, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ARMERDING TO CLOSE VERBAL TESTIMONIAL FOR THE PUBLIC HEARING AND LEAVE OPEN SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN TESTIMONY, PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, (7-0).

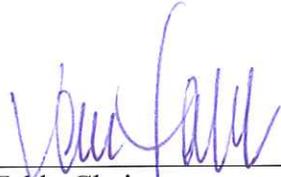
MOTION BY COMMISSIONER ARMERDING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ELY TO TABLE THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT UNTIL THE DECEMBER 8, 2016 PLANNING COMMISSIONER MEETING, PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, (7-0).

E. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS: None

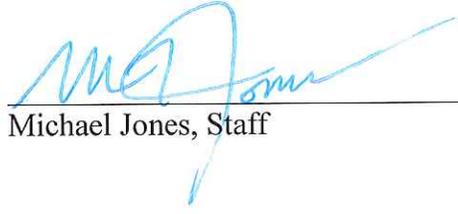
G. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER ARMERDING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OWENS TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 22, 2016, APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0).

H. ADJOURNMENT 9:00 PM.



Van Tabb, Chair



Michael Jones, Staff

Planning Commission minutes of December 1, 2016, to be approved at the December 8, 2016
Planning Commission meeting.