



**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
501 North Anderson Street, Ellensburg WA 98926**

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**MINUTES OF ELLENSBURG CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

**Date and Time:** Planning Commission \*Special\* meeting of May 7, 2020 at 5:45 p.m.  
**Place of Meeting:** City Council Chambers, Ellensburg City Hall  
**Present:** Beverly Heckart, Fred Padjen, Gayl Curtiss, George Bottcher, Ed Harrell, Geraldine O'Mahony  
**Absent:** Gretchen Thatcher (excused absence)  
**Others Present:** Community Development Director Kirsten Sackett; Planning Manager Jamey Ayling, Senior Planner Shannon Johnson; City Attorney Terry Weiner, City Engineer Derek Mayo, Public Works & Utilities Director Ryan Lyyski, IT & Telecom Manager Ben Faubion, IT System Administrator Drew Houk, Steven Clark, Project Manager, & Design Team Members, Jinger Haberer, ESD Superintendent, Several Members of the public via Virtual Attendance – See Official Recording

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chair Padjen called the meeting to order at 5:47 pm.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Commissioner Heckart moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Curtiss seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Previous minutes were not included per the Governor's OMPA restrictions in place.

**4. PUBLIC HEARING**

- a. Open Record Public Hearing (QUASI-JUDICIAL) to consider a Conditional Use Permit Request (P19-133) submitted by the Ellensburg School District #401 in order to construct a new Elementary School at 2100 N. Cora Street (parcel # 11711), in the Residential Suburban (R-S) zone on property owned by the District

Acting Chair Padjen introduced the public hearing and explained the procedures of the quasi-judicial hearing and asked the appearance of fairness questions. No issues were raised, and there were no objections to the participation of the commissioners.

Senior Planner Johnson presented the staff report included in the agenda packet. She stated that the Ellensburg School District has submitted a conditional use permit application in order to construct an approximately 55,000 sf, 500-student new elementary school on a 15.29-acre site located at 2100 N. Cora Street. She referred to exhibits in the staff report for renderings and additional clarity.

Johnson said that the property is currently zoned Residential Suburban (R-S). Citing Ellensburg City Code (ECC) Table 15.310.040, she said that schools may be permitted within the R-S zone

through the granting of a conditional use permit when approved by the Planning Commission at a public hearing, in accordance with the procedures set forth in ECC 15.250.040.

A SEPA Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS) was issued for the project on March 20, 2020 along with a Critical Area Determination of Approval with conditions, issued on the same day.

Johnson said that the Ellensburg School District (ESD) purchased the Cora Street property on June 28, 2018, after receiving bond approval for its capital improvement program in the November 6, 2018 general election. The bond addressed several projects to be completed within district priorities, one of which was to construct this new elementary school.

The school district held a public meeting on September 18, 2019 concerning the placement of the school. After hearing public concerns, and considering various alternatives, the district submitted a boundary line adjustment application to the City on October 31, 2019. This boundary line adjustment was finalized and recorded on February 11, 2020, resulting in the new lot proposed for the location of the new school.

Johnson stated that the subject property is north of the Palouse to Cascades trail, and south of the Helena Street right-of-way. Primary access to the school will be via Cora Street which will be constructed to extend to the north and bisect the property along the existing street right-of-way across the property. The Cora Street extension will stop at the boundary line, approximately 112 feet south of the center line of the Helena Street right-of-way.

Johnson further explained that the subject property is currently unoccupied, fallow pasture land. Aerial photos indicate that the property has been vacant since at least 1956 and has not been utilized as operational farm land other than livestock grazing.

Johnson referred to the site plan included in the packet as Exhibit 3c, noting that in addition to the school building itself, the applicant is proposing to include playfields, playgrounds of hard and soft surfaces, fire/emergency access, bus lanes, student drop off lanes, and parking typical to a school facility, at 70 parking spaces.

Johnson then explained the process for obtaining feedback on the proposed conditional use process. She said that the applicant previously participated in a required pre-application meeting in which City Departments conducted an initial review to outline all necessary code requirements. When the departments were again contacted to review the conditional use permit, some city departments referred back to the original comments from the SEPA application review and/or pre-application meeting, while others submitted additional comment letters for the conditional use permit review. Johnson said all of the department review comment letters were attached as Exhibits 7a. thru 7h. The applicant has been informed by both the Public Works and Planning Departments that any future proposals will require additional conditional use review and will likely trigger additional requirements.

Johnson shared the City's compliance with the noticing requirements, including mailing notice to property owners within 300 feet, publishing in the Daily Record, and having the applicant post a land use action sign on the property, all within the specified time frames.

Johnson said that at the time of the report only one public comment had been received, which was included in the packet as Exhibit 8. Two more comments were received after the packets went out, and Johnson asked that Chair Padjen admit them into the record as Exhibits 8a and 8b. Johnson shared her screen to show the additional comments, and read them into the record.

Johnson outlined the procedural requirement for a conditional use permit application. She stated that it is Type III permit and must be considered in a quasi-judicial open record public hearing before the Planning Commission which has been designated as the final decision-maker. She referred to ECC 15.250.040 which outlines authority of the Commission, including the ability to prescribe appropriate conditions and safeguards, in conformity with the zoning code, and to prescribe a time limit within which any conditional use shall commence or be complete, or both.

Johnson then referred to ECC 15.250.040(C) which states that the city may approve, or approve with conditions, a conditional use permit only if the applicant demonstrates that the project complies with the 13 decision criteria. She said that the staff report included the applicant's narrative followed by a Staff analysis addressing whether this project complies with these criteria.

After reading through the staff analysis, Johnson stated that Staff found the conditional permit application to be in keeping with the decision criteria of ECC 15.250.040(C), and that as such, Staff is recommending approval of the conditional use permit. She said that staff is not recommending any additional conditions beyond those already required through the various permitting and review processes. Staff would further recommend that the Commission review the application materials and staff report, and weigh any evidence presented at the public hearing to determine what, if any, conditions should be applied.

Johnson concluded that if the Planning Commission should choose to follow the recommendation of Staff and approve the conditional use permit, Staff would also advise the Commission that they adopt Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law applicable to this project, as found on page 11 of the packet.

Vice-Chair Padjen asked if the applicant had a presentation at this time. Steven Clark of Integrus Architecture introduced himself and said that he would introduce other members of the project team at various times throughout his PowerPoint presentation. He shared his screen to show several elevations of the new school building including landscaping, parking areas, and the overall project site area. At this time Mr. Clark introduced the Ellensburg School District Superintendent, Jinger Haberer, to present project background information.

Superintendent Haberer stated her name and information for the record and thanked the commission and the community for the opportunity to move this project forward. She stated that she and the district are very excited about the opportunities this new school will provide for the students. She gave special thanks to the community for voting to pass the bond for this project and she explained all of the elements which were included in the bond. She provided background information on the public participation process in which the district involved students and community members as a part of the design team to identify key values including many open spaces for outdoor education.

Jennifer Hackett, Ellensburg School District Board member spoke regarding her history on the board since the beginning stages of the project. She explained the diligence that was taken to be very transparent throughout the public participation process. Ms. Hackett provided a synopsis of the driving needs of the project such as having a whole school worth of children being housed in portables, and the selection of the property site located north of Mt. Stuart School where growth has been occurring.

Steven Clark continued with his PowerPoint presentation and gave an overview of the boundary line adjusted parcel site. He explained that although the entire parcel is approximately 15.88 acres, the school will only occupy 50%, and the rest will be left in open spaces and critical areas. He spoke about the existing easement crossing the Palouse to Cascades Trail which was

appropriated to accommodate sewer extension and the future extension of Cora Street as required by the Comprehensive Plan.

Clark shared his screen and guided the group by identifying wetland areas, building material renderings, separated parking and drop-off circulation, landscaping buffers, and the Cora Street extension turn-around. He explained some of the challenges with the site specific to the wetlands, and the prevailing winds. He stated that all of these factors, along with the public participation-identified need for outdoor learning resulted in this simple, clean, hardworking school made of durable, appropriate materials which complements the existing agriculture and residential nature and provides outdoor learning oriented within a secure, controlled outside courtyard space.

Clark introduced team member Jim Shannon, Wetland Scientist for Hart Crowser Inc. Mr. Shannon stated he has been conducting wetland science consultations for 20 years. He explained the wetland delineation process, including an on-site meeting with Lori White from the Department of Ecology. He explained the identified wetlands and the mitigation requirements on both sides of the road, including enhancements which will be monitored for at least 5 years, and created on the title of the property to ensure perpetuity.

Clark pointed out that as a part of this process, the team worked with the State Parks & Recreation Department for the portion of Cora Street which will cross the Palouse to Cascades Trail. He then introduced his next team member Eric Fitzpatrick, Civil Engineer with HBL. Fitzpatrick informed that they are not proposing changes to the irrigation drainage, and that they are not planning on changing the existing irrigation patterns.

Clark moved on to introduce Matt McDonald, Civil Engineer. Mr. McDonald stated that currently there is a 2-way stop on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Cora Street, and they plan to mitigate with an all-way stop control at the intersection to improve the level of service. Staggered start times for the schools will also be implemented.

Clark concluded the end of the design team's presentation. Director Sackett asked that Acting Chair Padjen enter the PowerPoint presentation into the record at this time. Padjen stated for the record that the presentation was being entered into the record as Exhibit 14.

Chair Padjen opened the floor to testimony from the public and provided instructions for how to participate in the virtual meeting.

Joanne Duncan introduced herself and gave her email address for the record. She stated that she is the principal at Lincoln Elementary School and is very grateful to the community and excited because the new building will solve the current overcrowding of students.

Stefanie Wickstrom, 1701 N. Iowa Street introduced herself and wanted to second what Ms. Duncan said. She stated that she is very impressed with the design, and expressed that as a resident of the nearby neighborhood, she finds living next to a school to be quite pleasant, and often quiet. She prefers that another school be built rather than a housing development and she enjoys being able to use the school grounds herself. She concluded that she encourages the Planning Commission to approve the project as the school will be a much needed enhancement to the neighborhood.

Dan Patton, 1702 Hobert Ave. introduced himself as the Principal of Mt. Stuart School. He stated that he has been the principal of 6 schools and had never seen anything close to the outdoor learning area, essentially the students' very own forest at Mt. Stuart school which was created over 40 years ago by the teachers and students as a science lab. He stated that by building the

new school within close proximity, this amazing outdoor learning area can now easily be accessed by two schools.

Padjen asked if Staff had anything to add at this time. Staff did not. He then asked if the applicants had anything further to add at this time. Hearing no, he asked if the commissioners had questions of staff or the applicant.

Commissioner Heckart stated that she had three questions. Padjen advised that questions be asked one at a time. Heckart asked if Cora Street will not extend to Helena Avenue, will the only access to the school be from Cora Street. Staff and the Applicant's team provided clarification that yes Cora Street will provide the only access. Her second question was regarding the life expectancy of the building materials. Steven Clark answered that with proper maintenance the materials could last in excess of 100 years; however, the various materials have individual warranted lifetimes of 15-40 years. He explained roofing materials for instance have a warranty of 15 years. Heckart asked what happens to the existing Mt. Stuart School buildings. Clark answered that the existing school building will be demolished, however, the existing gymnasium will remain.

Commissioner O'Mahony asked what the rationale was for not extending Cora Street to Helena Avenue. City Engineer Derek Mayo gave background information on the project review process which included Fire Department emergency access review. Steven Clark expanded on the review process and explained the challenges with the encroaching residences along Helena Avenue and the expenses associated with crossing the canal which ultimately led the district to pursue adjusting the boundaries of the parcel.

Commissioner Curtiss voiced concerns about the safety of the Cora Street cul de sac not being accessed by Helena Avenue, and asked sked questions about Cora Street crossing the Palouse to Cascades Trail. Staff provided information about the SEPA review and referred this question to the applicant's Traffic Engineer. Steven Clark explained that the crossing will be similar to the existing trail crossing near 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Water Street. Curtiss asked if Commissioner Heckart shared her concerns. Heckart answered yes and reminded Curtiss there will be an opportunity for commission discussion later.

Commissioner Bottcher discussed the 13 decision criteria required and referred to #7 on page 6 of the packet. He asked questions regarding the Traffic Impact Analysis report, the Non-motorized transportation plan, and Safe Routes to School. Chair Padjen interjected and asked Matt McDonald further questions about the proposed width of the road and if that width would allow room for a bicycle lane. Erick Fitzpatrick answered that the half street minimum standards and TIA report did not require a bike lane on Cora Street.

Commissioner Bottcher asked questions regarding flood events. Johnson shared her screen to show that the property is not located within the FEMA-delineated floodplain.

Chair Padjen closed the Public Hearing portion of the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

The Commission deliberated on the matter and presented various motions that were not acted upon until the following was presented:

**Motion:**

Commissioner Heckart moved that the Planning Commission accept the recommendations of the Community Development Department to approve the Conditional Use Permit as submitted with conditions to follow. Chair Padjen seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion passed.

Commissioner Heckart proposed several options to include conditions to ensure implementation of safe routes for both motorized and non-motorized transportation. Discussion ensued. Director Sackett advised the commissioners on how this could best be accomplished which promoted the following motion:

**Motion:**

Commissioner Bottcher moved that the Planning Commission approve the Conditional Use Permit to build a new Elementary School at 2100 N. Cora Street (parcel #11711), in the Residential Suburban (R-S) zone on property owned by the district, as submitted by the Ellensburg School District #401 and finds that the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are applicable to this project:

**Findings of Fact**

1. Application 19-133 for a Conditional Use Permit was submitted by Ellensburg School No. 401 on November 20, 2019.
2. The Applicant is an agent for the owner of this property, addressed as 2100 N. Cora Street (Parcel ID# 11711), located in the R-S zoning district, and can pursue this action.
3. Notice of Public Hearing was made known to the general public as required by ECC 15.230.020.
4. Per ECC Sections 15.210.050 and 15.250.040, the Planning Commission has jurisdiction to review this project.
5. A public hearing on P19-133 has been held on May 7, 2020.
6. It is in the interest of the City of Ellensburg to utilize vacant and underutilized infill lots with safe and compatible uses. This proposal, if approved would not negatively alter the character of the neighborhood.

**Conclusions of Law**

1. As proposed, the conditional use permit application has been reviewed and found to be consistent with the decision criteria listed in ECC 15.250.040(C).
2. As proposed, the conditional use permit should not have a significant adverse impact on public welfare and safety.

Commissioner Padjen seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor.

**Motion:**

Commissioner Bottcher moved that in addition to the approval of the conditional use permit application, the Planning Commission finds that additional findings of fact are pertinent and therefore would add the following conditions:

- 1) Ellensburg School District #401 shall work with the City of Ellensburg to develop and implement a Safe Routes to School program that specifically addresses safe access routes to the new elementary school site(s), and which shall be presented to the City for inclusion in an update of the City's nonmotorized transportation plan.

- 2) The new elementary school shall include sheltered, covered parking for non-motorized vehicles.

Vice Chair Padjen seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor.

## **5. ADJOURNMENT**

Acting Chair Padjen thanked staff, the school district and everyone in attendance and adjourned the meeting at 9:07 pm.