



Minutes of the September 14, 2010
Special Planning Commission

Members Present: Linda Marchand, Denny Landguth, Pat Wyss, Julie Gregg, Eric Christensen, Dennis Popp. Erick Braun joined the meeting in progress.

Others Present: Randy Fisher, Nancy Hovdenes, Tim Deckert, Dave Davis, Karen Bulman, Bob Dominicak, Marcia Elkins, Monica Heller

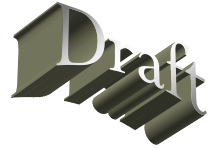
Gregg called the meeting to order at 5:37 pm.

Bulman reviewed the process for beginning the review of the Landscape Ordinance and the City Council's authorization of the consultant contract to revise the existing landscaping regulations. She introduced the consultant team from Designworks, Inc. Bulman noted that the approach the consultant team has recommended is completely different from the point system in the current Zoning Ordinance.

Nancy Hovdenes reviewed the process utilized in reviewing the existing ordinance, identified the consultant's evaluation of the Rapid City built environment and outlined the various stakeholders that had been interviewed to provide input including City staff, the Beautification Committee and the development community. Hovdenes noted that the consultant sent out surveys to the allied professionals, that two public input meetings were held and she reviewed the other efforts to obtain public input. Hovdenes explained the numerous landscaping ordinances that were reviewed from across the country including communities from the Northern Great Plains as well as other communities in the Intermountain West with similar climatic conditions. Hovdenes reviewed the seven objectives of the project.

Fisher reviewed the provisions of the draft ordinance and the problems with the current ordinance. He presented photographs of Rapid City noting the lack of street trees as well as the location of the majority of the landscaping at the rear of the lots. He showed pictures of various sites in Rapid City and how the owners met the requirements for the landscaping at the rear of the lots where it is not visible to the traveling public. He noted the difficulties experienced with the existing small islands located within parking lots. He presented additional photographs of other communities with more pedestrian friendly street frontages and street trees as well as photographs of successful landscapes that rely on street trees in Rapid City.

Fisher reviewed the concepts incorporated into the draft ordinance including the frontage landscape setback, the adjoining landscape setback, the coordination with the storm water requirements, the buffering of adjoining parking lots and the screening of residential areas. He reviewed the difficulties associated with islands in parking lots experienced under the requirements included in the current code. Fisher reviewed the proposed requirements for small parking areas with 100 parking stalls or less and the options for the installation of trees around the perimeter of the parking lot or an alternative to locate the landscaping within the



parking lot. He went on to review the requirements for large parking lots with more than 100 stalls and the options for the use of large separation areas providing areas for storm water management as well as the alternative for smaller islands that are a minimum of 8 feet wide with 120 square feet of area per tree and a 240 square foot minimum area. Fisher reviewed several prototypes and the numerous alternative plans for existing sites. He noted that the proposed regulation slightly reduces the developable area on small lots; however, it has a limited impact on large lots and may actually increase the developable area.

Wyss expressed support for the draft ordinance and the approach focusing on streetscape appeal. Wyss indicated that he had a few minor comments. He referenced the definition of the landscape area on page 1 and suggested clarification.

In response to Wyss' comments, Fisher indicated that the percentage of rock mulch allowed had been increased as a result of the public input. Wyss referenced some confusion with the language on page 5. He asked for clarification of the exceptions outlined in page 14 for "adjoining" landscape setbacks.

Wyss referenced his concern with the need for warranty to insure that landscaping is maintained in a living condition and the difficulty with enforcing soil requirements. He asked that the warranty issue be revisited. Wyss supported the reduction in the number of parking stalls and suggested that there also be an option for small or compact stalls. He expressed concerns with the lack of requirements for the installation of proper soils.

Fisher reviewed the items that had been included in the previous drafts and dropped out due to the difficulty with enforcing the requirements. He noted that the requirement for landscaping along the front setback is very easy to enforce by simply driving down the street. Discussion continued on the inclusion of reduced building setbacks for the reduced setback.

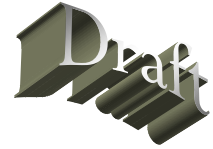
In response to a question from Wyss, Hovdenes reviewed the exception process.

Popp expressed concern for the impact of snow removal from the site and the impact of street cleaning and chemicals on the landscaping. Discussion followed.

Marchand expressed concern with the percentage of rock mulch allowed and the resulting weed patches. Discussion followed with the tradeoffs between having simple regulations and the critical aspect of good soils.

Popp asked for clarification on the affect on water usage. Hovdenes reviewed the ordinance requirements for water conservation included in the ordinance. Discussion followed on the need to simplify the ordinance and balancing the requirements for professional expertise, the games played with the existing landscaping point system and the focus on frontage landscape requirements.

Wyss left at this point in the meeting.



Landguth expressed concern that the trees be located outside of the right-of-way so that the roads can be expanded without eliminating trees that have previously been planted. Discussion followed.

In response to a question from Elkins, Hovdenes reviewed the public comments received including the reduction in the frontage landscaping width. She reviewed the inclusion of the exception process to allow the smaller site development as well as the redevelopment of sites. She noted that there was concern expressed that the street trees would affect the visibility of signage. Discussion followed on the costs associated with automatic irrigation controllers, the costs associated with the larger size of plant material that must be installed initially and the requirement for landscaping in the various zoning districts. Discussion followed regarding the approach to xeriscaping, the requirement for diversity of species and the inclusion of the technical manual. Hovdenes noted that through the public input process the comments focused on increasing the amount of rock mulch allowed.

Popp asked if the consultant had evaluated the number of parking spaces that would be lost on the smaller sites. Fisher reviewed the various alternatives that the consultant has evaluated and the affect on the development of new sites and the reduction in the required parking spaces on redevelopment sites.

In response to a question from Landguth, Fisher reviewed the options and noted that the elimination of the interior parking lot landscaping, may actually reduce the costs particularly on large parcels. Landguth asked for clarification on how the proposed requirements will affect redevelopment of existing lots.

Marchand left the meeting at this point in time and Braun entered the meeting at this time.

Discussion followed on the triggers for complying with the landscaping requirements, the definition of expansion and the potential for "game playing". In response to a question from Davis, Fisher indicated the greatest concern is with redevelopment sites and writing standards that will apply in every situation.

Elkins complimented the consultant team for their efforts in developing the concept and ordinance.

Davis noted the focus on the frontage will increase the pride of ownership and assist in assuring the maintenance of the landscaping.

Elkins reviewed the areas where the consultant team has compromised in the development of a simple code that is reasonable to enforce.

In response to a question from Davis, Fisher reviewed the compromise made by increasing the percentage of rock mulch. Discussion followed on the advantages and disadvantages of rock mulch as part of the landscaping.

Elkins identified the options available to the Planning Commission.



Christiansen moved to bring the ordinances forward through the formal public hearing process. Braun seconded the motion. A brief discussion followed.

Gregg noted that a quorum of the Commission was no longer present and formal action could not occur. She requested the item be included on the next Planning Commission agenda.

Discussion followed on the implementation process and the relative cost of the existing requirements versus the proposed regulations.

Elkins indicated that based on the final changes and revisions that have been requested in the draft document, the updated draft could not be available for the next Planning Commission. She indicated that staff would bring the discussion item forward as soon as possible.

Gregg adjourned the meeting at 7:25 pm.