



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Final

Planning Commission

Wednesday, August 4, 2021

7:30 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Chris Spivey (Chair), Darrell Windsor, Stacy Mudry, Wendy Alderson, Katie Riley, Kevin Mosher (Assembly Liaison)

Absent: None

Staff: Amy Ainslie, Ben Mejia

Public: Sherrie Greenshields, Steve Hedges, Maegan Bosak, Trevor Sande, Nycole Gizinski, Rachel Roy, Ariadne Will (Sitka Sentinel)

Chair Spivey called the meeting to order at 7:45pm.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

Chair Spivey requested that Evening Business be heard before Reports.

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A [PM 21-17](#) Approve the July 21, 2021 meeting minutes.

Attachments: [17-July 21 2021 DRAFT](#)

M-Riley/S-Alderson moved to approve the July 21, 2021 meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

B [PM 21-18](#) Approve the July 21, 2021 special meeting minutes.

Attachments: [18-July 21 2021 Special Meeting DRAFT](#)

M-Riley/S-Alderson moved to approve the July 21, 2021 special meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie stated that she had nothing to report that was not on the agenda.

VI. REPORTS

C [MISC 21-14](#) Short-term Rental Community Survey Results

Attachments: [Short-Term Rental Community Survey Result May 2021](#)

Ainslie reported the findings of the short-term rental (STR) community survey as requested by the Commission on May 5, 2021. Ainslie noted that the survey had been open from May 12 - May 28 and respondents were not required to give any identifying information, all questions were optional, and questions regarding income and housing expenses included the option "Prefer not to answer".

Ainslie informed the commission that the respondents were mostly current Sitka residents and approximately 50% renter and 50% homeowner. Ainslie shared responses on difficulty to find housing and the percentage of income spent on housing. Ainslie noted that renters reported the most difficulty in finding housing, as well as respondents within income brackets between \$15,000-\$74,999, and described a bell curve with most respondents answering that they spend between 20-30% of their gross household income on housing expenses.

Ainslie identified that about 2/3 of respondents answered that they were concerned about the impact of STRs on the housing market, and shared suggested actions which included permit limits held by one owner, permit closure after property sale, fee or tax increases, city-wide caps on number of STRs, limits based on neighborhood concentration, and owner occupancy as the primary residence. Ainslie noted that a few STR owners had participated in the survey, and shared some responses. Ainslie recognized that there was some confusion by participants on the definition of STRs. Riley noted that the survey suggested community support for additional regulations on STR permitting, though she recognized further action may need to wait until the conclusion of the tourism planning.

Ainslie informed Mosher that the report would be included in the next Assembly correspondence packet.

The Commission opened the floor for public comment. Rachel Roy stated that seasonal workforce housing was critical for the local economy and urged for data to be collected specifically on workforce housing.

VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

- D** [VAR 21-11](#) Public hearing and consideration of a zoning variance to increase the maximum allowable height of a principal structure from 40' to 90' for a communications tower at 4660 Halibut Point Road in the I - Industrial district. The property is also known as Lot 61A, S&S Minor Subdivision. The request is filed by Vertical Bridge Development, LLC. The owner of record is 4607 Halibut Pt. Rd, Sitka, LLC.

- Attachments:** [V 21-11 Vertical Bridge 4660 Halibut Point Road Height Variance Staff Report](#)
[V 21-11 Vertical Bridge 4660 Halibut Point Road Height Variance Aerial](#)
[V 21-11 Vertical Bridge 4660 Halibut Point Road Height Variance Site Plans](#)
[V 21-11 Vertical Bridge 4660 Halibut Point Road Height Variance Elevation](#)
[V 21-11 Vertical Bridge 4660 Halibut Point Road Height Variance Plat](#)
[V 21-11 Vertical Bridge 4660 Halibut Point Road Height Variance Photos](#)
[V 21-11 Vertical Bridge 4660 Halibut Point Road Height Variance Applicant Materials](#)

Ainslie introduced the proposal for an increase in the maximum height for principal structures from 40' to 90' for the purpose of a communications tower to fill a coverage gap for the anchor tenant, Verizon Wireless. Ainslie noted that the height was requested for the tower to be tall enough to avoid signal obstructions, and stated that while there would be some visual impact, other impacts were likely to be minimal due to the existing industrial use of the site. Ainslie noted that support for this proposal was found in the apparent need for more cell capacity as identified in the public comments during short-term tourism planning meetings as well as Comprehensive Plan action item ED 5.3. Staff recommended approval.

Sherrie Greenshields and Steve Hedges, who represented the applicant, were present. Windsor and Mudry expressed concern over potential health impacts from the use of 5G and requested studies to show that 5G was safe. Greenshields offered to provide them with studies after the meeting.

The floor was closed for public comment. Hedges requested to speak.

M-Windsor/S-Alderson moved to reopen the floor for public comment. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

Hedges commented that, as 5G would increase the range and speed of emergency calls, safety would increase with a 5G network. Windsor and Mudry responded that this did not assuage their concerns.

M-Riley/S-Alderson moved to approve the variance for an increase in the maximum height of principal structures at 4660 Halibut Point Road in the I – Industrial district. The property was also known as Lot 61A, S&S Minor Subdivision. The request was filed by 4607 Halibut Pt. Rd, Sitka, LLC. The owner of record was Vertical Bridge Development, LLC. Motion passed 3-2 by voice vote.

M-Riley/S-Alderson moved to adopt and approve the required findings for variances involving major structures or expansions as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 3-2 by voice vote.

E [VAR 21-12](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a zoning variance to exceed the maximum of three principal structures (six total requested) on 611 Alice Loop in the WD - waterfront district. The property is also known as Lot 2C, Dr. Walter Soboleff Replat. The request is filed by Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium. The owner of record is Southeast Alaska

Regional Health Consortium.

Attachments: [V 21-12 SEARHC 611 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Staff Report](#)
[V 21-12 SEARHC 611 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Aerial](#)
[V 21-12 SEARHC 611 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Site Plan](#)
[V 21-12 SEARHC 611 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Elevation](#)
[V 21-12 SEARHC 611 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Floor Plan](#)
[V 21-12 SEARHC 611 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Plat](#)
[V 21-12 SEARHC 611 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Photos](#)
[V 21-12 SEARHC 611 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Applicant Materials](#)

Ainslie introduced the item as interrelated with item V 21-13, as they were part of the same development plan on separate lots. Ainslie informed the Commission that in 2019, the applicant Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) had completed a housing study as part of its proposal for a new hospital. The study found that Sitka would need 72 dwelling units to accommodate the increase in staff from an expansion and that Indian Health Service (IHS) required SEARHC to own the units as part of their agreement to fund the staff package.

Ainslie noted that 611, 621, and 631 Alice Loop were all part of the development plan for SEARHC to meet that need, and that the applicant planned for detached structures on 611 and 621 Alice Loop to provide high-value housing in keeping with the existing neighborhood. Ainslie noted that the applicant may wish to plat these units as condominiums but that was not currently their intention as it may jeopardize their funding from IHS.

Ainslie explained that a zoning variance was requested to allow for 6 principal structures on a single lot as the Zoning Code allows for 3 principal structures on a single lot in multi-family and commercial zones, as the Waterfront district is. Ainslie noted that it may be worth future consideration to introduce Code language for development of more than 3 principal structures as similar development becomes more frequently pursued.

Ainslie explained that this proposal was within permissible density for the area, which would allow for 22 dwelling units on the lot as a ratio of lot size per dwelling unit. Ainslie described the proposed structures as single-family 3 bed, 2.5 bathroom homes with a garage and 2 parking spaces per unit. Ainslie noted that while there would be an increase to traffic and noise in the area, it was less than would result in the maximum development allowable on the lot. Staff recommended approval.

Mudry asked whether the proposed site plan would allow for future subdivision without pursuing a variance to setbacks. Ainslie responded that as a condominium plat, setbacks would not be a concern.

Maegan Bosak, Trevor Sande, and Nycole Gizinski were present as representatives of the applicant. Bosak clarified that as part of their agreement with IHS, SEARHC would need to hold the units for no less than 20 years and that the housing would be used as

a recruitment tool to incentivize and house employees. Bosak explained that outdoor storage would be heavily restricted to prevent cluttering of common areas and maintain neighborhood aesthetic. Sande included that the proposal was intended as a higher end product similar to what had been developed in Juneau.

Ainslie read public comment submitted by Lynne Brandon, who expressed concern for limited outdoor space in the development as a resident amenity. Brandon stated that in major subdivisions and Planned Unit Developments, green space was a requirement and that this variance avoided that need. Brandon voiced concern over access and safety and commented that she felt there was insufficient time between packet publication and the meeting date for the public to respond.

Riley expressed concern over setting precedent without establishing clear guidelines for such development and the concern that any potential docks may cause for adjacent harbor access. Ainslie acknowledged that a process should be established within the Code for similar development but that a variance was the only tool available until such Code changes were made. Ainslie noted that any docks would require city involvement and access to the harbor would be maintained.

Bosak responded that they would not build any docks as part of the development. The Commission voiced their consent of the proposal.

M-Alderson/S-Windsor moved to approve the zoning variance to allow six (6) principal structures to be built at 611 Alice Loop in the WD waterfront district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot 2C, Dr. Walter Soboleff Replat. The request was filed by the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium. The owner of record was the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M-Alderson/S-Windsor moved to adopt and approve the required findings for variances involving major structures or expansions as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

F [VAR 21-13](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a zoning variance to exceed the maximum of three principal structures (seven total requested) on 621 Alice Loop in the WD waterfront district. The property is also known as Lot 2B, Dr. Walter Soboleff Replat. The request is filed by Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium. The owner of record is Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium.

- Attachments:** [V 21-13 SEARHC 621 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Staff Report](#)
[V 21-13 SEARHC 621 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Aerial](#)
[V 21-13 SEARHC 621 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Site Plan](#)
[V 21-13 SEARHC 621 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Elevation](#)
[V 21-13 SEARHC 621 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Floor Plan](#)
[V 21-13 SEARHC 621 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Plat](#)
[V 21-13 SEARHC 621 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Photos](#)
[V 21-13 SEARHC 621 Alice Loop Maximum Structures Variance Applicant Materials](#)

Ainslie explained that the proposal was related to the development proposed in V 21-12, though it was on a 21,038 sq. ft. lot at 621 Alice Loop. The proposal was to allow for 7 principal structures on a single lot. Ainslie noted that the maximum density for the lot was 17 dwelling units. Ainslie identified support from the Comprehensive Plan to provide more diverse housing types and rehabilitate the housing stock. Staff recommended approval.

Alderson asked if mold might be an issue, due to the proximity of structures to each other.

Maegan Bosak, Trevor Sande, and Nycole Gizinski were present as representatives of the applicant.

Sande and Gizinski explained that mold was not a concern due to the materials used and the airflow between the structures. Bosak reiterated that outdoor storage would be heavily restricted. The Commission voiced consent for the proposal.

M-Mudry/S-Windsor moved to approve the zoning variance to allow seven (7) principal structures to be built at 621 Alice Loop in the WD waterfront district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot 2B, Dr. Walter Soboleff Replat. The request was filed by the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium. The owner of record was the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M-Mudry/S-Windsor moved to adopt and approve the required findings for variances involving major structures or expansions as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

G [MISC 21-09](#) Discussion/Direction on Short-Term Tourism Plan

- Attachments:** [Staff Memo 8.4.21](#)

Item not discussed

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no objections, Chair Spivey adjourned the meeting at 9:13pm.