

**Mayor's Business Ready Task Force Minutes**  
**July 31, 2012**  
**2:00 – 5:00 PM, Municipal Court Room**  
**Albany City Hall, 333 Broadalbin St. SW, Albany**

---

Attendees: Arthur Meeker, Sharon Konopa, Mark Spence, Jessica Pankratz, John Pascone, Jeff Christman, Greg Roe, Rob Richards, Dala Rouse, David Reece, Rob Reimers, Oscar Hult

Staff: Evan Fransted, Ron Irish, Mike Leopard, Heather Hansen, Jeff Blaine, Lisa Bennett, Gary Stutzman, David Martineau, Mike Trabue, John Bradner

Guest: Richard Berger, Realtor's Association

---

1. Review and approval of June 19 minutes

Christman noted that Don Sullivan's first name was listed incorrectly in the minutes and asked for that to be corrected. Meeker moved to approve the minutes as corrected, Pascone seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Business from the public

None.

3. Off-street parking standards (Heather Hansen) (see agenda file)

Off-street parking standards are intended to provide for adequately sized and designed parking and loadings areas that provide continuous flow through the parking lot allow pedestrians to move safely to and from buildings are attractive and protect adjacent properties from adverse impacts of uses with inadequate off-street parking. Albany's off-street parking space requirements are prescriptive rather than performance based, and have not been thoroughly reviewed or updated for awhile, though they are in line with many other jurisdictions.

Questions: Why can't the market decide this? Why aren't the standards more flexible? Why do we require parking that isn't needed? How can we provide more flexibility in achieving adequate parking spaces?

Hansen said off-street parking usually comes up as an issue when a change of use is proposed. Some categories, such as day care and construction contractors, are completely missing from the Development Code. Some communities have incentives to reduce the amount of parking needed but those are generally communities with more use of mass transit.

Pankratz mentioned two properties for sale that require more parking than what potential buyers believe is needed and there's no way to redraw the lot to get another spot. Fransted said Corvallis allows an exemption for change of use. Christman asked about situations where you don't know what the new use is but are told you need another parking spot anyway. Pascone said for some infill properties, there's no place to go.

Group discussion continued regarding creating parking requirements that are obvious; minimizing effects on neighboring land uses; and proximity to other off-street parking. Hansen said people shouldn't have to go through pre-application review for every new lease; Pascone said people get turned away because of the requirements. Consensus was to make the requirements flexible and permissive and to build that in at the front end of the process.

Reece asked how the type of space use applies to parking requirements, such as space used for storage versus customer interface space. Spence said the code should be broadly known about businesses and realtors – if a building has x amount of space, it requires x number of parking spaces. Fransted added that anything beyond two spaces requires ADA consideration.

Richards asked about parking in the Elm Street district, noting that, by 7:30 a.m., not one parking spot is in sight, particularly around old houses that have been repurposed to be medical offices. Hansen said the purpose of the zone was to support the medical community; medical offices have moved into old houses with no off-street parking. Fransted quoted code on parking in Elm Street district. Rouse noted that sometimes off-street doesn't have to be on site; it can be down the block or shared. Discussion continued about parking in the Elm Street district, how parking is managed there, and who may be inconvenienced. Hare said the Elm Street district is a good illustration; in large measure it functions pretty well. In any community, he said, you will find places with some congested parking. The questions to ask is are you driving people out of their homes or businesses or is it just a feature of the neighborhood? Hansen noted a study of parking downtown done by Fransted a few years ago to address a perception of a parking problem there. The study showed that isn't true.

Discussion turned to property on Queen Avenue near the railroad tracks, a photography business, KRKT offices and Clock Tower Realty. Reece asked if the required number of spaces is determined by the building's use or gross space. Hansen suggested eliminating space used for storage and for HVAC systems in parking calculations. Fransted said space requirements are sometimes calculated per employee and, for other uses, by sales floor area. Hare asked how one determines the difference in storage space and display case space, citing a new market on the east side of town. Reece spoke of a change of use on the Queen Avenue property that required upgraded landscaping and paving the parking lot.

Consensus:

- Add 2-space cushion similar to Corvallis, for infill/redevelopment only, and only if there isn't sufficient space onsite.
- Revisit the ratios in the code. Add explicit flexibility up front.
- Allow Director to provide flexibility as well, such as variations in types of uses and their parking needs.

#### 4. On-street parking allowances

On-street parking is intended for general public use. When on-street spaces are counted toward the parking requirements of a business or other use, they are basically committed to that use. Customers and employees of businesses without adequate off-street parking who consistently park in front of homes or businesses may adversely impact those residents and business owners.

Question: Can we allow this to count toward parking requirements in more circumstances than allowed currently?

Martineau's research found that only Bend allows for on-street parking, which can count for up to 50% of required parking under limited circumstances. Those tend to be uses that have occasional gatherings of people. He also found zones that allow counting on-street parking toward parking requirements, and infill standards for village center zones that allow counting on-street parking within 100 feet of development. Hansen asked if additional locations or circumstances that make sense as well, such as industrial areas with a lot of employees parking on the street with no adverse impact because the parking does not affect residences. Christman asked if two businesses on the same site. Hansen said the requirement is supposed to be based on the frontage of the property. Discussion

followed about several existing businesses, changing uses, and requirements for new construction. Staff presumes that new construction will choose a place where they have the space for parking. Pascone said he would favor letting something happen than not. Hare said it becomes an issue with private property; creating one advantage at the expense of another is where problems begin. Konopa mentioned that Pascone and Janet Steele had parking on their list for this task force to discuss; any specifics? Hare mentioned parts of Ferry Street, industrial on both sides, where nobody parks on the street because they don't need to.

Rouse said there should be a difference between existing and new construction. Hare said Bend has some provision for that; staff will look at the wording of their code. Martineau said in more congested urban areas, parking could require more enforcement. Designers have to be very mindful of bike lanes, so doors aren't being opened into them. Businesses could also look at angled parking, which can fit a lot more in. Discussion continued on different considerations in commercial and industrial zones; the merits and limitations of marking on-street spaces; and parallel versus angled parking.

Consensus:

- Review Bend concept and adjust it for Albany
- Only allow on frontages
- Industrial areas, and other areas that won't impact residential neighborhoods
- Include a few examples of problems

#### 5. Parking lot landscaping

Parking lot landscaping is multi-purpose, providing shade, directing traffic and pedestrians safely, reducing stormwater runoff and enhancing the overall appearance of the city.

Questions: It seems excessive. Why is it needed for even a few parking spaces? Can we relax the standards due to the economy?

Hansen summed up parking lot landscaping: it looks nice and it costs money. The Comprehensive Plan is supposed to guide the Development Code: ADC provides for an alternate plan that's more flexible. Some of what people consider parking lot landscaping is actually buffering and screening. Front and interior set back areas are also separate from parking lot.

Discussion followed regarding the impact of trees in parking lots; neglected landscaping at empty businesses; the benefits of landscaping versus additional parking; and stormwater runoff. Hansen said any code changes would mostly affect changes of use and infill. Additional discussion addressed stormwater management and water quality and how to integrate them beneficially into existing development; and use of bioswales and other permeable options. Hansen said staff doesn't want to make a lot of changes to parking lot landscaping knowing that stormwater standards are coming to the City Council for discussion and action. Blaine said state standards will only be required on new projects or those that are one acre and larger.

Consensus:

- Add threshold for requiring planter bays – Comp Plan says four
- Require maintenance of landscaping and enforce it!
- Wait to make any other changes until Public Works is done developing new stormwater quality regulations

6. Paving

Paving, along with curbing and landscaping, provides both visual and functional benefits – aesthetics, stormwater collection, dust control, and clear demarcation of stalls, traffic aisles and pedestrian ways.

Questions: Why don't we allow gravel parking lots for overflow parking or allow other materials? Why does the code reference the Public Works Director?

Hansen said for temporary or seasonal parking or special events a couple of times a year, gravel is allowed. Using gravel is a matter of what the community wants. Considerations include the cost of paving, appearance, and changes in use. Discussion covered paving requirements for existing uses versus new development; limited-duration parking; parking areas used for storage; and ADA surfacing requirements.

Consensus:

- Bring back option for temporary and seasonal use of gravel parking lots for "overflow" parking, not required parking
- Clarify difference between gravel areas for storage versus parking

7. ADA parking requirements

The City complies with this federal regulation through the State Building Codes.

Question: The regulations seem excessive. Why do we require it when some other cities don't?

Bennett provided a handout on accessibility requirements for parking (see agenda file.) She described the City's program, permitting process, and response to complaints. Other communities in Oregon have been subjected to lawsuits for failing to comply; our program can help prevent that, and it is really important to the disability community, Bennett said. Many disabled people don't care about access issues after they get into a building; getting to the building is a bigger issue.

8. Nonconforming situations/vacant buildings

The main issue is how to balance bringing nonconforming situations into conformance over time with out-of-pocket costs to businesses that want to use the sites now. Some buildings that have been vacant for a long time have lost their nonconforming status. Most nonconforming situations are: a once-legal use that is no longer allowed by current regulations; or allowed uses on property that have a nonconforming development that doesn't meet current requirements.

Questions raised:

- Why does nonconforming status expire after just one year?
- Can improvements "commensurate with development" be more clearly defined and addressed more simply?
- Can we be more flexible in giving owners or businesses time to make required improvements?
- Can we be more flexible with new uses or development on challenging properties?

Leopard provided a list and maps of four properties to provide recent examples of challenging sites: 530 Queen Avenue SW; 1977 Santiam Highway SE; 615 Water Avenue NE; and 1260 Price Road SE. Each property prompted lengthy group discussion.

Consensus:

- Staff will bring back proposed revisions to the Nonconforming Situations section of the code, including reverting to nonconforming status.
- Staff has direction to look at the Waterfront District differently.

9. Other business

Rouse asked about a roofing company on residential property near Bowman Park that stores roofing tiles there. Hare said staff will look into it.

10. Next meeting: August 14, 2012, 2:00-5:00 p.m., to discuss the Development Review Process, start to finish.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Smith

Public Information Officer