

SOUTH DOUGLAS / WEST JUNEAU AREA PLAN
Steering Committee Meeting
Zoom Webinar Format
Tuesday, May 3, 2022
FINAL MINUTES

Steering Committee Members Present:

Carole Bookless Rebecca Embler ___ Liz Smith
 Matt Catterson Arnold Liebelt Linda Snow
 Frank Delaney Robert Sewell ___ Joyce Vick

___ H. Erik Pederson, Planning Commission Liaison (non-voting)

Kamal Lindoff, Property Manager, Douglas Indian Association Liaison (non-voting)

Bernadine DeAris, Douglas Indian Association Liaison (non-voting)

___ Annette Smith, Docks & Harbors Liaison (non-voting)

Staff Members Present:

Beth McKibben, CDD Senior Planner ___ Scott Ciambor, CDD Planning Manager

___ Jill Maclean, CDD Director ___ Dan Bleidorn, CBJ Lands Manager

Members of the Public Present: Darren Snyder

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 5:09 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes

The draft minutes for the April 13, 2022, South Douglas West Juneau Steering Committee meeting were approved by consensus.

III. Public Testimony on Agenda Items – 10 minutes

Mr. Snyder notes the focus area includes Mayflower Island. He advocates CBJ and the greater community work to have the Douglas Indian Association (DIA) become the new owners of the island. It has significant historical context for the people of the DIA. He has reviewed the draft vision statements and thinks the fourth (newest) does a good job of bringing them all together. Looking at the future of the docks area, he would like an emphasis on local ownership and that it be pedestrian friendly.

IV. Public Testimony on Non-Agenda Items – 10 minutes

Mr. Snyder suggested the plan recommend that CBJ make reparations to DIA through an assessment of fair market value of lands and property taken from the Douglas Indian Village.

Mr. Snyder noted that he did not see the meeting noticed on social media.

Ms. McKibben stated the meeting was properly noticed and it is on the project website. She also had not seen it on social media. She will look into that.

V. Land Use and Zoning Discussion in relation to Harbor & Commercial Focus Area

Identify Opportunities and Constraints (*reminder to keep the Plan Elements in mind – Connected, Distinctive, Sustainable and Future Focused, Prosperous, Healthy and Active, Culturally and Artistically Rich*)

Ms. McKibben noted the packet includes information to discuss the vision statement, but she did not expect to have time for that this evening. She would like to touch on the vision statement before ending the meeting to give the committee some things to think about in preparation for the next meeting.

Ms. McKibben then shared a power point presentation and reviewed the feedback she is seeking from the committee. She gave a brief description of the current zoning districts in the focus area and described two zoning districts that may be appropriate for this area; Mixed Use 3 and Neighborhood Commercial.

Ms. McKibben listed concepts she has heard from the committee and focus group reports as opportunities for the focus area, mixed use, historic/cultural preservation/heritage tourism/district, more amenities at Treadwell Area, inside/outside, future of ball field closest to park's maintenance building, improved bus service. Ms. McKibben also asked the committee for feedback on what is "right size tourism" to them.

Ms. Bookless asked if Savikko Park is zoned D18. It is. Ms. McKibben noted that for CBJ property managed for parks the zoning isn't as critical as it is for private ownership. Ms. McKibben recommended there be less focus on the zoning and more on keeping the property managed as a park and not available for disposal. Ms. Bookless noted that the zoning makes it look like there is more land for residential development than there really is.

Ms. Snow had a question about a zoning for the washeteria site. Ms. McKibben said it had been rezoned a few years ago.

Mr. Sewell thinks the WI zoning is not the best use of that property and would like residential uses and mixed use. He would like to see improved walkability from the Treadwell area towards St. Ann's Avenue, C, and 5th. He likes the idea of a community garden at Savikko Park and more year-round activities. The arena is an asset and serves all of Juneau and draws people to Douglas. He would like a second sheet of ice and a restaurant or coffee shop. He considers right size tourism to be boats of 50 passengers or less, no major tourism corporations and more locally owned tourism businesses. He does not want Douglas to be a wasteland nine months of the year. He would like to look for other types of year-round sustainable jobs. Could the city shop be moved so that space could be better used?

Ms. Bookless asked if the WI is on fill and if Ms. McKibben knows what the soils are. Are there limitations?

Ms. McKibben said she did not know. She also noted Flood zones may be another limitation. She asked Ms. Bookless if she is concerned about more residential uses in that area. Ms. Bookless said yes, that maybe the reason its zoned WI. Ms. McKibben said she would look into it and report back.

Mr. Delany supports the concept of a community garden at the ball field closest to the park's maintenance shop.

Ms. Snow thinks right size tourism means no congestion, not lots of buses, and no commercial traffic on Treadwell Trail. For WI, she would like to see opportunities for more residential uses. For Mayflower Island, she thinks maybe a museum.

Ms. Bookless would like access and views of the waterfront to be maintained. She would like a "water walk" along the shore. It could be lower cost, such as a gravel trail. She likes the idea of a historic district and would like old buildings to be retained and restored, but she is concerned about what sort of restrictions might come with that type of designation.

Ms. Bookless likes the idea of a community garden, but thinks that sometimes they look junky and would like the park "jewel" to stay beautiful. If the garden can't be kept neat and attractive she is not in support of one at that location. She notes there are still unpaved streets. She would like more amenities at the bus turn around at Savikko Park, and more covered bus shelters. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game site is underutilized for parking and the space could be better used for commercial uses.

Ms. Bookless is in support of a curling rink at Treadwell. She would like more art shops and maker's spaces in Douglas. WI area could be better used and she would like to hear from the broader community about what would bring them to downtown Douglas.

Ms. McKibben asked for clarification on the water walk. Ms. Bookless said from the bridge to Mayflower Island and not necessarily a board walk.

Mr. Snyder is in favor of growing space at the first field. It could be a community garden or commercial community garden with a manager for food that could be sold, or with partners like the school and DIA or a demonstration garden. He believes the aesthetics can be managed.

Mr. Catterson asked if the ice rink is open in the summer. The ice is out April thorough August, but the arena is used for roller blading in the summer.

Mr. Liebelt said there was day camp and it had been used for tennis.

Mr. Catterson is uncomfortable telling people what they can or can't do with their private property. WI and the gravel parking lot at the harbor – he would like to see sidewalks, landscaping, benches etc. It is a beautiful spot and the views are great, it should be enhanced. The boat ramp area could be improved, but parking is important there. If too much parking is eliminated people will not come to Douglas to launch their boats. People use the Douglas harbor because it's a good place to launch. There is disconnect between the harbor/park and the commercial area on 3rd street. He would like to see better connections to encourage more walking between the areas. The ball fields are underutilized. Community gardens can be messy, but in his opinion it would be an improvement over the empty dirt fields. There is an opportunity to add another anchor in this location like a coffee shop.

Mr. Liebelt agrees with Mr. Catterson on the need for connections and walkways. He likes the concept of coffee shops or similar into the harbor improvement area where there is currently gravel. He envisions seating/tables, benches, some seating covered and walking paths. The area gets morning sun and would be good to have coffee shop or similar incorporated into parking improvements.

Mr. Liebelt asked if Capital Transit has plans for improvements to bus service in Douglas or if there is a need. He is not opposed to tourism. He is opposed to cruise ships docking in Douglas, and does not want to see businesses that are closed most of the year. He wants any business to be viable year round. He would like tourists to come to Douglas and learn the historical significance of the community.

Mr. Liebelt thinks the curling rink is a good idea. He is concerned a second rink or second sheet of ice isn't financially viable. The curling rink attracts a new and different client. He supports the concept of a community garden or growing space at the park. He would like an additional ramp at the harbor for non-motorized uses.

Ms. Embler asked for clarification of the difference between Light Commercial and General Commercial.

Ms. McKibben gave an overview.

Ms. Embler agrees with what others have said. She would like to see more activity and a variety of businesses. She wonders what a community center would look like – maybe that could be at the field, a building that showcases Douglas history and culture – something that brings people together, but is not necessarily for profit.

Mr. Delany supports the idea of a community garden or something similar in that location. He likes the idea of the curling rink, but wonders how much use it would get. Maybe that space could be a mixed use space in case there isn't a lot of interest in curling. He likes the idea of a community center or similar that isn't a commercial space. This would fulfill the goal of culturally rich and artistic.

Mr. Lindoff agrees with most of the comments. More recreational/educational/cultural uses. He agrees with Mr. Snyder's suggestions.

Mr. Sewell would like to explore collaboration with Sealaska Heritage and DIA for culturally appropriate signage or other ways of acknowledging and sharing Douglas' history. He would like the plan to support enhanced bus service and to promote less driving. He agrees there is disconnect between the harbor and the commercial area, and agrees with the need for better pedestrian connections. The plan is meant to take a long view of what the community should look like how it should develop and that involves private property.

Mr. Sewell likes the idea of a curling rink, but does not agree that a second rink isn't financially viable and is concerned that a second sheet of ice in the valley would be a mistake for Douglas.

Ms. DeAris agrees with what Lindoff said.

Ms. Bookless asked if they could get more information about a demonstration garden and wondered if it could be a teaching garden. She reminded everyone there is a reason why things are the way they are. She would like more history of Savikko Park and why the village was burned. She has seen photos of the village and it was cool with buildings on stilts. Maybe wooden walkways on stilts could be incorporated that would be more traditional. She used to ride the bus and didn't appreciate the bus stop being moved

from St. Ann's to Savikko Park. She would like to encourage seasonal food carts at the harbor, and more wind breaks. She thinks the pedestrian connections are fine, but would like to see more activity.

Ms. Snow stated that there is a small mining museum on Mayflower Island. Maybe it could be moved and would be a good attraction for Douglas. She also mentioned that if you do an internet search on the burning of the Douglas Indian Village you can find some history.

Mr. Lindoff said the DIA has some written history on the burning of the village. There is a history booklet that he can pass on to anyone interested. There is a surviving tribal elder who lived in the village who watched it burn and he may be willing to come and share some of that history with the committee.

Ms. Bookless would like to know what the "plan" was when the village was burned.

Mr. Delany agrees with the ideas presented by Mr. Snyder at the beginning of the meeting about Mayflower Island.

Ms. Snow used to work for DIA and had a box of records. There was a lot of back and forth between the City of Douglas and DIA to get the village to move. It was burned in 1962.

Mr. Sewell said the University of Alaska Southeast has an anthropology professor who has done a presentation on this topic and he may be a good resource.

Ms. McKibben went over the differences and similarities between LC and GC. She described some of the uses in the table of permissible used from each district and what the differences are. The primary difference is the scale of development or the type of permit that may be needed. GC allows more types of manufacturing, more residential density and larger office spaces. She said she was hearing the committee say the WI area is under used. She briefly went through the differences between WC and WI. She recommended examining the difference between these zoning districts and the committee may want to consider recommending this area be rezoned to WC.

Ms. McKibben shared Mr. Snyder's comments from the chat – more fun places for kids, skate boarding, bike jump track, gardens to pick from, would like to try curling, buses should run on holidays – barrier to bus rides from seeing family. A link was provided to a video on the Douglas Indian Village, which she will email out.

Ms. McKibben said she got helpful information and recapped – more attractions in Douglas and more things for people to do when they get here, helpful information on "right size" tourism. She will do more research on the WI. She reminded the committee that if a plan recommends a rezone there are more steps that would have to happen before it is rezoned. She also said that if an existing use doesn't comply with new zoning it doesn't have to go away. It would become nonconforming and would be allowed to continue. She pointed out that there are many different zoning districts. She suggested the committee sit with this information and consider if their vision might be better supported by different zoning and would the smaller lot sizes in the new zoning districts be helpful.

Ms. McKibben asked the committee to please respond the Doodle Poll. She outlined the work plan that Ms. Eddins had created and she thinks this plan would still work. It will be more efficient for the committee to react to concepts than to try to create them as a group in the meetings. She also said they need to work on the equity lens.

VI. Draft Vision Statement

Ms. McKibben quickly went over the packet materials – what is a vision statement and why do we need one. She explained that action recommendations need to support the vision. She reviewed the various vision statement options that were in the google document and explained that she took parts of all of those, reviewed them with the plan elements and put together a fourth option for consideration. She also explained that she prefers the vision statement to be a positive affirmation “I am” vs “I will be”. She asked the committee to review the vision versions and come prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

VI. Committee Comment

None.

VII. Scheduling Meetings

Ms. McKibben reminded the committee to please complete the doodle poll so they have potential dates for future meetings.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6.52 pm.

Next Meeting Date: May 31, 2022, via ZOOM