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From: Steve Hall <shall@pointconsulting.us>
Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2020 11:13 AM
To: PRC
Subject: Notice of Revised Application for Project 3033991-LU: Request for Extension

CAUTION: External Email

On behalf of Friends of Historic Belltown, Inc., and of several other organizations and interested stakeholders that have contacted Friends of Historic Belltown, **I am requesting a 14-day extension to the public comment period for the Notice of Revised Application for Project 3033991-LU.**

In addition, I have the following comments on the Notice itself that I hope may inform development better notices in the future.

The notice states that the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) intends to apply the Optional DNS Process (WAC 197-11-355) to this project. However, SDCI has apparently **failed to use reasonable methods to give notice of the application to the public**, as required under RCW 36.70B.110 Notice of Application—Required Elements. Specifically:

*(4) A local government **shall use reasonable methods to give the notice of application to the public and agencies with jurisdiction** Examples of reasonable methods to inform the public are:*

(a) Posting the property for site-specific proposals;

(b) Publishing notice, including at least the project location, description, type of permit(s) required, comment period dates, and location where the complete application may be reviewed, in the newspaper of general circulation in the general area where the proposal is located or in a local land use newsletter published by the local government;

(c) Notifying public or private groups with known interest in a certain proposal or in the type of proposal being considered;

(d) Notifying the news media;

(e) Placing notices in appropriate regional or neighborhood newspapers or trade journals;

(f) Publishing notice in agency newsletters or sending notice to agency mailing lists, either general lists or lists for specific proposals or subject areas; and

(g) Mailing to neighboring property owners.

Friends of Historic Belltown was not made aware of the notice until it specifically requested in writing if one was available. **It appears that SDCI has failed to take any of the required reasonable methods described above.** As of Tuesday, May 26, Friends of Historic Belltown had not received the notice, and the notice was not available on SDCI's Permit and Property Records webpage for Project 3033991-LU

<http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/edms/default.aspx?ref=3033991-LU>). We were unaware that there is a separate webpage for public notices. The extension of the public comment period should provide adequate relief from this omission. However, moving forward, Friends of Historic Belltown strongly recommends that SDCI review its public notice procedures and revise them to be in compliance with the reasonable notice requirements of RCW 36.70B.110.

Finally, the entire review process for this significant project – from my perspective, the perspective of several members of the Belltown community, and probably from the perspective of the applicant -- has been fragmented and difficult to follow and understand. Friends of Historic Belltown recommends that SDCI examine its SEPA processes for opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental reviews. For projects that may significantly affect communities, such as this project, I would recommend that the City develop a better public involvement effort through an integrated SEPA process so that there is **only one process to follow**, rather than a fragmented mosaic of multiple processes. For review, I recommend SDCI consider the clear policies set forth in SMC 25.05.030 SEPA Policy, as indicated in **bold** below:

Agencies **shall to the fullest extent possible:**

1. Interpret and administer the policies, regulations and laws of the state of Washington in accordance with the policies set forth in SEPA and these rules;
2. **Find ways to make the SEPA process more useful to decisionmakers and the public;** promote certainty regarding the requirements of the act; reduce paperwork and the accumulation of extraneous background data; and emphasize important environmental impacts and alternatives;
3. Prepare environmental documents that are concise, clear, and to the point, and are supported by evidence that the necessary environmental analyses have been made;
4. **Initiate the SEPA process early in conjunction with other agency operations to avoid delay and duplication;**
5. **Integrate the requirements of SEPA with existing agency planning and licensing procedures and practices, so that such procedures run concurrently rather than consecutively;**
6. **Encourage public involvement in decisions that significantly affect environmental quality;**
7. Identify, evaluate, and require or implement, where required by the act and these rules, reasonable alternatives that would mitigate adverse effects of proposed actions on the environment. (Ord. 114057 § 1(part), 1988; Ord. 111866 § 1(part), 1984.)

I have seen historic preservation and SEPA being criticized as reasons for project delays within the City of Seattle. However, I strongly believe that the facts and law both support that it is neither historic preservation nor SEPA that is delaying project review, but rather the fragmented – and potentially legally flawed – process by which SDCI carries out its obligations under the law. I would be happy to work with SDCI to further discuss my concerns regarding the City’s procedures and potential opportunities for improving both the efficiency and effectiveness of SDCI’s SEPA reviews and associated public involvement efforts.

SEPA is simple and clear in its direction. It is when agencies fail to follow this simple and clear guidance that projects get delayed. I understand that SDCI is extremely busy and short on staff. However, I believe that taking short-cuts are more likely to lead agencies down the wrong path, rather than expedite the clear and valuable role that SEPA and related project reviews play in making informed and effective decisions regarding the human environment within the City of Seattle.

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