

**Alta Planning Commission  
Minutes  
November 13, 2007**

The Alta Planning Commission held a meeting on November 13, 2007 at 12:00 pm at the Market Street Cottonwood at 2985 East Cottonwood Parkway (6580 South) in Salt Lake City. Planning Commission members in attendance included Ed Blaney, Joan DeGiorgio, Skip Branch, Lee Kapaloski, Jan Striefel, and Prescott Muir. Town of Alta Mayor Tom Pollard and Town of Alta Administrator John Guldner, were present. Town of Alta attorney Katie Lewis was also present. Members of the public present included Mark Haik, Charles Livsey, Craig Call, Onno Wieringa, and Carolyn Anctil. A tape recording of the meeting was created and is kept at the Town of Alta office.

**Introduction and Opening Statement by Chair**

Alta Planning Commission Chair Skip Branch thanked everyone for coming to the meeting, and stated that this would be an information-only meeting.

**Discussion on Future Role of Planning Commission**

Mr. Branch stated that for the last couple of months the Town has been deliberating about the Planning Commission's role. In his view, the skill sets within the Alta Planning Commission are matched by none. He has been having discussions with the Mayor and Town staff to determine how the Planning Commission could benefit the Town.

Historically, the Alta Planning Commission has been reactive to issues. Mr. Branch wants to consider how to be more proactive. Mr. Branch also believes the Alta Planning Commission should look at all elements in the canyon that impact the Town of Alta. The Planning Commission is interested in quality of growth (not quantity), transportation, public safety, and watershed protection for the Town and the people of Salt Lake.

Mayor Pollard stated that in the past, the Alta Planning Commission was reactionary; if there wasn't a permit/non-conforming use before it, the Planning Commission did not meet. Mayor Pollard would like to use the strengths of the Planning Commission to look toward the future. There are issues before us now that are going to affect what happens in the next five to ten years, and we want to start looking at those proactively, not reactively. The Mayor would like to get the Planning Commission together on a regular basis, at least quarterly. He would like to use the Planning Commission's expertise for advice and help in planning for possible changes in Alta.

Ms. DeGiorgio asked how the Mayor sees the Town Council's role. She wondered if the Council is in the same position and are more reactive, and if they would like to be more proactive, or are they looking to the Planning Commission for that. Mayor Pollard responded that the Council is at a point where they would like to see more energy accomplish certain projects. He does not believe the Council has had a specific

discussion related to Ms. DeGiorgio's question, but thinks that both the Council and Planning Commission could serve in concert in a more proactive way.

Mayor Pollard indicated that the issue of community and resort planning is emerging, and that he needs help and another sounding board as a planning effort moves forward. He also indicated that the Alta community wants to both remain economically viable and maintain its historic identity. There is a movement to build a new community center and to address garbage, and instead of spot reacting to these ideas, it would be better to talk about these and other issues in a more global context.

Further discussion ensued about the importance of integrating the Planning Commission into the legislative process with the Town Council.

### **Introduction of New Attorneys Representing the Town of Alta**

Mr. Guldner explained that Paul Thompson, the Town's former attorney, had to resign his position with the Town because he is taking a judgeship position in Midvale. Mr. Guldner summarized that the Town selected the law firm of Parsons Behle and Latimer to represent the Town on legal issues.

Ms. Lewis stated that the firm is thrilled to be working with the Town. She stated that they see their role partly as trying to help the Town position itself to not be in such reactive situations.

Mr. Kapaloski clarified that although he does work for Parsons Behle and Latimer, he will not be involved with the firm in its representation of the Town. His role with the Town will be limited only as a Commissioner on the Alta Planning Commission.

### **Discussion of Base Facilities Zone**

Mr. Guldner gave a summary of the Base Facilities Zone. The intention of the Base Facilities Zone was to help the base hotels. The hotels used to be situated on Forest Service Special Use Permit leases. When the hotels were on these Forest Service leases, and they wanted to expand, they were not subject to the same type of zoning they are now because they were situated on Forest Service land. The hotels were able to purchase the leased property from the Forest Service during a land swap project between Trust for Public Lands, Salt Lake City and the Forest Service. These lands were then subject to County zoning whether or not they had the enough land to meet the zoning. This created problems later because the property owners were artificially restricted by the amount of land from the preexisting special use permits from the Forest Service. Because of this artificial restriction on expansion, the Council, with recommendation from the Planning Commission, looked at a range of increased zoning density for hotel use only in the original Base Facility area (those lands that were formerly under permit with the Forest Service). The resulting density increase in the Base Facilities Zone for hotel rooms was 33 rooms per net developable acre instead of 20 rooms. This includes requirements for

additional employee housing and parking. It is unclear how a room would be defined in the Base Facilities Zone in a condo-hotel use situation under our current Base Facilities Zone and whether that would allow for the additional density.

Further discussion ensued regarding the original intentions of the Base Facilities Zone and how to clarify the Base Facilities Zone to meet the desires of the Town. The discussion included whether there were other communities that might provide examples to the Town, some conversation regarding how rooms might be defined, and parking and transportation issues. Part of the discussion is centered on the question of what is the core of Alta; is it a few nice hotels that function well, and if that is the policy condominiumized suites are not going to fit. Mr. Branch stated that it boils down to a question of impacts to transportation, parking, space, etc... Mr. Branch asked that staff prepare information that would address impacts and research what other communities have done in similar circumstances. Mr. Kapaloski mentioned that discussing the core issues of what Alta wants in this regard would be a good topic for a joint meeting with the Town Council. Mr. Guldner stated that the Town would start researching what other areas are doing on this topic, and get a feel for what the Town Council and the community are thinking. Mr. Branch asked that any helpful information that Planning Commissioners might have regarding resources be forwarded to John.

#### **Update on Alta Ski Lift's Projects**

Mr. Wieringa was called upon by Mr. Branch to give an update report regarding Alta Ski Area. Mr. Wieringa stated that he has a few projects to report on, but by far the most important is master planning for the ski area, which relates to everything the Planning Commission has been talking about in this meeting. Mr. Wieringa stated that at the heart of all of this discussion is capacity for the entire canyon, including tying in the master plan for new development at Snowbird.

Mr. Wieringa used the Patsy Marley property (Shrontz property) as an example of resort planning, and gave the history of Alta Ski Lifts Co. involvement in the property. He stated that Alta Ski Lifts Co. bought the upper property, with an option to purchase the lower property from John Cahill, and did some master planning, along with some consultation with the Mayor, resulting in a conclusion that it would be good to have some more hotel rooms in the Town of Alta. Alta Ski Lifts Co. decided that the company did not really want to be developers, but found somebody who did want to build a hotel property in Alta. Alta Ski Lifts Co. bought the lower property and sold it to the developers, and they started down the road of getting more hotel rooms in Alta. That ended tragically (with the deaths of Jody and Duane Shrontz). Now the whole issue is back on the table and people are looking at Alta Ski Lifts Co. and asking what are they going to do now.

Resort master planning is important to consider. Alta Ski Lifts Co. is working on master plans. They have already done their own winter capacity analysis, and they are reviewing winter capacity analysis again. Mr. Wieringa feels that the Forest Service should be

brought into this planning process. Summer capacity analysis also fits into the planning process.

Mr. Wieringa stated that environmental programs in Alta also affect the planning, and Mr. Wieringa feels that Alta Ski Lifts Co. has already picked the low hanging fruit, and he is struggling with what to do next. Alta Ski Lifts Co is studying right now to figure out a model that works for the company environmentally and economically that might fit well into the community relative to summer. Alta Ski Lifts Co. will share that study with the Planning Commission. Another important component is mountain transportation studies, which are based somewhat on capacity. A tunnel to Big Cottonwood Canyon might not be the answer, but it is good to continue the conversation on mountain transportation, including capacity issues.

Mr. Wieringa reported that Alta is incorporating a new electronic ticket system, a new Watson's, and an improved snow-making system. Alta Ski Lifts Co. is also working on Albion Basin lift master planning. The Forest Service has completed its winter travel plan for the Albion Basin. The Forest Service decision said that the best way to not have any problems was to not have any OSV traffic between 8 am and 5 pm during the day. The decision has yet to be implemented because the Forest Service is looking at some of the private rights of way issues that are coming up now relative to the decision.

Mr. Branch asked about any new lift plans in the ski area. Mr. Wieringa stated that they are looking at all of the lifts. He is not sure what drives the analysis; does an assessment of capacity come first. Mr. Wieringa also stated that per UDOT's Highway Avalanche Plan, one of the alternatives to using artillery for avalanche control over the Town of Alta is to put a ski lift up (in the Flagstaff area) and do avalanche control and/or ski it at the same time as a way to control avalanches over the Town. Mr. Wieringa also stated that it is no secret that at times Alta Ski Lifts Co. talks with other ski areas about interconnect, and that would have to integrate back with transportation and capacity issues.

Mr. Muir asked about how the interconnect with Snowbird has played out. Mr. Wieringa stated that he is very pleased with it. He thinks it has very little environmental impact, and it has big economic impact for Alta. Mr. Wieringa reported that the interconnect between Alta and Snowbird has made Alta-Snowbird go from making barely any rankings at all as a resort to going to the top of the rankings.

Mr. Kapaloski stated that given the previous discussion about Alta's "core" and the vision for downtown Alta (i.e., the hotels), and Alta Ski Lifts own planning process, it is important for Alta Ski Lifts Co. to be present for the Planning Commission's discussion. Ms. DeGiorgio wondered whether the County's Canyons Master Plan should be redone so that this conversation could also happen in the context of other interested entities, such as Snowbird and the Forest Service. Ms. Striefel commented that the County's Canyons Master Plan is 20 years old.

Mr. Wieringa also commented about Salt Lake City (Public Utilities) working with Save Our Canyons on a new wilderness bill that does watershed protection, puts development where it should be, etc...

Mr. Kapaloski thinks collaboration between the Town of Alta and Salt Lake County just on development of Little Cottonwood Canyon itself is fundamental. Mr. Kapaloski further stated that what Snowbird does is going to overwhelm, or dictate, or preempt anything that the Town of Alta or Alta Ski Lifts Co. decides. We can't ignore our neighbor in any visioning for Alta's future, and should work with the County.

### **Staff Update on Current Projects**

Mr. Guldner stated that he just had a few things to report. Mr. Guldner reported that people ask why it has taken Hellgate so long to rebuild after the fire. He stated that Hellgate fought the requirements to build to current code and to avalanche specifications for eleven months. He stated that they finally relinquished and did some planning that met code and avalanche specification.

Mr. Guldner reported on Powder Ridge. He summarized the history of Powder Ridge, including the establishment of a caretaker unit in the project. The caretaker moved away and the Homeowner's Association could not afford to buy the caretaker unit. Three years ago the Planning Commission approved a condition to allow that the caretaker unit be converted to a house. The people who bought the caretaker unit want to expand the house. If they stay within the area of disturbance and the height limitations and it's okay with the Homeowner's Association and the Declarant, they will be able to build without going to the Planning Commission for approval. We have a legal question right now regarding how much pull the Homeowner's Association and the Declarant actually have on construction plans. Mr. Guldner then explained some of the details of the questions that have been raised for this project, and their implications.

Mr. Guldner reported on progress with respect to a possible new community center for the Town. He summarized that the Town has been using the Catholic Church as a community center for various activities, but it is difficult because it is small and parking is bad. A number of people have been looking into a new community center for the Town. Mr. Guldner then spoke about potential locations for a new community center and that the location and planning for a new community center may need to dovetail into more global planning efforts in the Town.

Mr. Guldner then reported on issues with respect to the Town's avalanche hold harmless agreement and one particular challenge facing the Town regarding whether the Town can withhold an occupancy permit if the avalanche hold harmless agreement is not signed.

### **Discussion and Vote Whether the Alta Planning Commission Should Go into Closed Door Session to Discuss Litigation Matters Pursuant to Sections 52-4-204 and 205 of the Utah Code**

Mr. Blaney moved and Mr. Muir seconded a motion to go into a closed door session to discuss litigation matters. A roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Kapaloski: abstain

Mr. Blaney: yes

Ms. DeGiorgio: yes

Mr. Muir: yes

Mr. Branch: yes

Ms. Striefel: yes

The motion was carried, and the closed door session started at approximately 1:45 pm. Those present at the closed door session included Commissioners Lee Kapaloski, Ed Blaney, Joan DeGiorgio, Prescott Muir, Skip Branch, and Jan Striefel. Mayor Tom Pollard, Town Administrator John Guldner, and Town Attorney Katie Lewis were also present. Ms. DeGiorgio moved and Mr. Blaney seconded a motion to adjourn the closed door session. The motion was carried with Mr. Kapaloski abstaining to vote and remainder of the Commissioners in favor of adjourning the closed session.

**Continuation of the Open Portion of the Alta Planning Commission Meeting**

The Commission continued the open portion of the Alta Planning Commission meeting, briefly discussion a time and place for their next meeting. The Planning Commission meeting was then adjourned.

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These minutes were passed and approved on the 10th day of June 2008.

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Kate Black  
Town Clerk