



ISLAND COUNTY PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Findings of Fact

RE: CPA 400/07 Seattle Pacific University

Summary:

CPA 400/07 Seattle Pacific University amends the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance to designate the Casey Conference Center as the Camp Casey Existing Master Planned Resort and adoption of the Camp Casey Master Plan. The Camp Casey Master Plan and supporting documents will serve as the guide for the future development of the site.

1. On September 27th, 2007, Seattle Pacific University submitted an application to designate the Camp Casey Conference Center as an Existing Master Planned Resort and for the adoption of the Camp Casey Master Plan. The application received file number CPA 400/07 Seattle Pacific University.
2. The application for Existing Master Planned Resort status consists of 82.54 acres of property owned and managed by Seattle Pacific University. This historic site is a part of the former Fort Casey military base which was constructed at the turn of the century. During both World War I and II the facilities of Fort Casey were used by the military. In 1954 it was officially declared as surplus. In 1956, Seattle Pacific University purchased most of the northern portion of the Fort Casey which is still in their ownership today.
3. In accordance with ICC 16.26.020 Staff presented the Annual Review Docket, which includes CPA 400/07 Seattle Pacific University, at a joint meeting of the Board of Island County Commissioners and the Planning Commission on February 28, 2008.

State Environmental Policy Act

4. Pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Chapter 43.21C RCW, an environmental checklist was included with CPA 400/07. Staff reviewed the checklist and issued a preliminary mitigated threshold determination of non-significance (MDNS) on April 2, 2008. The MDNS included 16 conditions.
5. On April 9th, 2008 Whidbey Environmental Action Network (WEAN) submitted a public comment and simultaneously filed a notice of appeal of the SEPA MDNS.
6. On April 14, 2008 the Ebey's Landing Trust Board, a division of the National Park Service, submitted a public comment letter in support of the application along with suggested modifications and additions to the MDNS.
7. On April 23, 2008 Planning and Community Development issued a revised mitigated threshold determination of non-significance. The Revised MDNS included 28 mitigating conditions, 12 of which were added during the revision.
8. On August 22nd, 2008 the Island County Hearing Examiner held a hearing on APP 112/08 WEAN.
9. On September 2nd, 2008 the Island County Hearing Examiner rendered a decision on APP 112/08. The decision upheld staffs SEPA Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance.

Planning Commission

10. Pursuant to ICC 16.26.020 the Planning Commission held a public meeting on May 13th, 2008. During the meeting staff presented CPA 400/07 to the Planning Commission. The presentation included a review of the Camp Casey Master Plan and supporting documents and Staffs report reviewing the application and providing findings.
11. The Planning Commission held public hearings on May 27th, 2008 and June 10th, 2008.
12. Public comment was received during both the May 27th and June 10th hearings. Questions were raised by the Planning Commission and clarifications were made by SPU, staff, and consultants.

Master Plan

13. The Master Plan is incorporated into the Island County Comprehensive Plan and constitutes an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The Master Plan is not subject to time limitations like many other county permits.

14. The Master Plan does not vest buildings or improvements that are shown on the conceptual site plan. Critical area review will be required for each future development permit application that is submitted.
15. The Master Plan does not waive concurrency requirements associated with future construction and/or improvements. Concurrency review and approval will be required for each future project. This is outlined in condition #21 of the MDNS.
16. The Heritage Forest boundary was initially established by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. SPU conducted a site evaluation and delineated the Heritage Forest Boundary which resulted in a slightly expanded forest boundary. The new delineation was provided to DNR who did not object to the expanded forest boundary.
17. The Master Plan initially stated that no trees could be removed from within the Heritage Forest for development. Through the SEPA appeal process the Plan was modified to state that no trees could be cut from within the Heritage Forest for development. While there are no plans for development to occur within the Heritage Forest there could be reason to cut a tree down that is compromising the safety of pedestrians who walk on the trails. In those instances where a tree needs to be cut for safety reasons the tree shall remain in the Heritage Forest rather than be removed.
18. A forest management plan accompanied the Master Plan and environmental checklist. The forest management plan and Master Plan were routed to DNR for comment on the SPU proposal. DNR provided feedback on the proposal which was incorporated into the final Master Plan and MDNS.
19. The Heritage Forest is surrounded by other forested areas. Some development and/or tree removal is proposed within the forested area that surrounds the Heritage Forest.
20. All parties have agreed that the Heritage Forest, and the forested area that surrounds the Heritage Forest, are susceptible to varying degrees of wind throw. No arguments were presented that contradict that wind throw is likely to occur irrespective of whether development occurs or not. Forested buffers have been established between the areas proposed for development and the Heritage Forest. The buffers are intended to reduce potential development impacts that could occur if significant trees adjacent to the Heritage Forest were removed. In addition to buffers, tree retention standards have been established that limit the overall quantity of timber removal that can occur and the size of trees that may be removed.

21. Additional information accompanied the environmental checklist that helped address storm water control, septage management, water usage and traffic. These technical memoranda, and the environmental checklist, have not been incorporated into the Master Plan and are therefore not considered part of the Comprehensive Plan. However, the technical memoranda and environmental checklist were critical pieces of information during the decision making process and basis for the SEPA threshold determination. Future decision making will require additional environmental review and consideration of environmental impacts. The Planning Commission emphasizes the need to consider the consistency between development proposals and the technical information that was used in the legislative review process when evaluating future development proposals. For example, the Master Plan may allow for the construction of a new building and the technical memoranda indicated that the new building would be supported by a specific septic treatment technology. In the future, when evaluating this structure it will be critical to compare the methods of septic treatment. If the methods are substantially different, additional environmental review and conditioning may be appropriate.
22. Additionally, the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development provided comments during the GMA mandated 60 day state agency review. CTED provides their opinion that Camp Casey does meet the definition of an Existing Master Planned Resort. CTED provides a number of comments on the management of the forested areas of the site. The Planning Commission agrees with CTED that these recommendations should be considered and that they are appropriately applied with each future development permit application.
23. Concerns were raised regarding the potential for SPU to sell the property and what becomes of the Master Plan in the event there is a new owner. The Master Plan governs the use of the property irrespective of ownership. Modifications of the Master Plan may only be initiated through a comprehensive plan amendment. Ownership of the site is an irrelevant factor in the management of the property.

Conclusions:

The Island County Planning Commission has reviewed CPA 400/07 and hereby recommends that the Board of Island County Commissioners adopt the proposed amendments and findings of fact.

Respectfully submitted through the Island County Planning Department to the Board of Island County Commissioners, pursuant to RCW 36.70A.040 and ICC 16.26, this
28th day of October 2008 by,



Alan Schell,

Island County Planning Commission, Chairperson