

MEETING MINUTES

Bruce A. Harrell
Mayor

Rico Quirindongo
Director, OPCD

Jill Crary, Chair

Kevin O'Neill, Vice Chair

Adam Amrhein

Phoebe Bogert

Kate Clark

Ben Gist

Brian Markham

Zubin Rao

Molly Spetalnick

Caitlin Truong

Michael Jenkins
Director

Valerie Kinast
Strategic Advisor

Windy Bandekar
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September 19, 2024

Convened 8:30 am

Adjourned 12:30 pm

Projects Reviewed

Commission Business

DSA digital kiosk program

Commissioners Present

Adam Amrhein

Phoebe Bogert

Kate Clark

Ben Gist

Brian Markham

Kevin O'Neill

Zubin Rao

Molly Spetalnick

Caitlin Truong

Commissioners Excused

Jill Crary

Staff Present

Michael Jenkins

Valerie Kinast

Windy Bandekar

Juliet Acevedo



Commission Business (8:30 – 9:30 am)

The following items were discussed.

1. Project briefing – DSA digital kiosks.
2. Approval of September 19, 2024 consent agenda (meeting minutes for July 18, 2024 and August 1, 2024).

DSA digital kiosks (9:30-12:30 pm)

The Commission received a presentation by DSA and their design team on their proposal to install up to 80 digital kiosks in downtown Seattle and various Business Improvement Areas (BIA). The request to approve this program is made through Seattle Municipal Code Section 15.65, governing significant structure term permits. The City Council will review and approve the proposal, following recommendations from the Commission and Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT).

The following people were presenters, or were present to answer questions:

- Mark Brands, Site Workshop
- Jon Scholes, DSA
- Clay Collett, IKE Smart Cities
- Jessica Burton, IKE Smart Cities
- Natalie Quick, Natalie Quick Consulting (attended virtually)

The following people attended:

- Robert Smith, K&L Gates
- Hyeok Kim, Insa Consulting
- Marni Heffron, Heffron Transportation
- Emily Burns, Office of the Waterfront
- Ruri Yampolsky, Office of the Waterfront
- Emily Burns, Office of the Waterfront
- Beverly Barnett, SDOT (provided comment)
- Ryan Durkan, HCMP
- Tom Bender (provided comment)
- Alex Hudson, Commute Seattle (attended virtually and provided comment)
- Sung Yang, Pacific Public Affairs
- Ryan Packer, The Urbanist
- Blake Sunderstrom, DSA (provided comment)
- Chris Mackay (attended virtually and provided comment)
- Rachel Mazur, HCMP (attended virtually)
- Doug Trumm, The Urbanist (attended virtually)
- Seth Geiser, DSA (attended virtually)
- Jack Wanner, IKE Smart Cities (attended virtually)
- Wrenn Wilson (attended virtually and provided comment)
- Craig Shaffer (attended virtually and provided comment)
- Matt Beaulieu, SDOT (attended virtually)
- Gabriel Seo, SDOT (attended virtually)

The presentation to the Commission focused on the following project features and issues:

- Public engagement
- Device functions
- Overview of SEPA reports
- Term Permit requirements
- Public Benefit package

Following the presentation, the commissioners asked clarifying questions and deliberated on the proposal. A motion to vote on the proposal was made by Adam Amrhein, with a second by Kate Clark. After further discussion the commission voted, using criteria in SMC 15.65 to guide their vote. 5 commissioners voted against the proposal and 4 commissioners voted in support of the proposal.

The following are comments made, in whole or in part, by commissioners in support of their respective votes:

Commissioners who voted against the project:

1. Brian Markham

I believe there are reasonable alternatives that aren't tied to advertising.

2. Kate Clark

After much deliberation and discussion, rigorous research, and in considering the term permit criteria, I am voting no. I am not convinced about the public benefit mitigation. I am also concerned about the kiosks' effect on traffic and pedestrian safety, pedestrian activity, the interruption to the existing streetscape, and view blockage.

3. Adam Amrhein

DSA, IKE, and the design team have done an excellent job in showing us this proposal. At the end of the day, these are nice digital billboards with a user interface that is of questionable use for residents; that is where I am evaluating this from. The Mayor's Office statement we were sent concerning this project's role in downtown activation called for "a bold and innovative approach" towards addressing downtown. Selling digital advertising is not "bold or innovative", nor does it match the spirit of Seattle. Viewing the project through the term permit lens, especially around enjoyment of neighboring land uses and the public benefits, I don't see it meeting those. The request doesn't appear to meet the sign code. The project does not meet the Commission's mission statement. There is not enough public engagement to justify the project. There are questionable public benefits. There are privacy concerns due to the Wi-Fi.

4. Zubin Rao

I could wholeheartedly support the project if advertising wasn't included. Given the context in Seattle where we do not have much advertising, the introduction of advertising in the right of way could significantly degrade our public realm. While some kiosk locations might be acceptable, I don't feel comfortable supporting the broad nature of the proposed programmatic term permit. The term permit code language asks us to

consider the public benefit mitigation elements provided by the proposal, and I do not believe the proposed benefits outweigh the intrusion of advertising.

5. Caitlin Truong

I believe that the kiosks are centered around business community and tourists. I wish it was more centered around residents. I see negative impacts on streetscape, pedestrian activity and neighboring land uses.

Commissioners who voted to support the project:

1. Molly Spetalnick

We have a lot of challenges in our downtown at this moment that require innovation and creativity. While I do acknowledge and share concern about conflicts with our signage code and about proliferation of advertising in the ROW, the support of the Mayor, City Council, and the Chief Innovation Officer demonstrate a belief that this initiative includes public benefit. To better align with our definition of public benefit, I will also want to see a robust demonstration of public benefit alongside the first kiosks, including assessment of other street furniture and tree canopy needs on impacted blocks. I also will want to see innovation that includes time periods when kiosks can be used for broader activation events, including advertising-free use during major art events, an ability that IKE confirmed is possible during questioning. This would also allow DSA to demonstrate the public benefits that they are uniquely qualified to provide, like ambassadors.

The biggest challenge for approval is the level of community input to date. My vote of support is with the condition that after 30 kiosks are installed, there is a much more rigorous process than the one provided for this review, to understand the concerns of local pedestrians, Seattle residents, local businesses, immediately adjacent businesses, and tourists. Without the condition, my vote would be no.

2. Phoebe Bogert

I am completely torn about this. If I vote no, it wouldn't be giving the proposal a fair shot. If I vote yes, it doesn't mean I fully support this proposal. I need to better understand how this benefits the public. My vote for the project is conditioned using the condition developed by Molly Spetalnick.

3. Ben Gist

Using the code criteria, the impact on existing streetscape will be addressed by SDOT and DSA in a thoughtful manner. I don't think it's a negative or a positive on pedestrian activity. I will defer to the Heffron Transportation work related to impacts on traffic and pedestrian safety. In terms of its implication on land uses, I think that the city is a destination that we want to welcome people to, and this may be a benefit to them. I think are recommendations in our upcoming report, to add to the public benefit package, that will address my concerns about the public benefit package. I would have liked more commitment from DSA on if they will, as opposed to could, make specific investments with the proposed revenue stream. I like the proposed check in on whether we are getting what we wanted from these after the first 30 are installed.

4. Kevin O'Neill

Would have preferred that the code was changed to support this program as opposed to using the term permit process. It matters that the DSA is doing this, as well as the support of the BIA's. It matters that organizations like Commute Seattle support this proposal. The public comment against the proposal has been compelling and very valuable. The design team has done an excellent job in communicating the proposal. In sum, it does not appear to violate term permit criteria. I am a tepid yes. It is all about the guardrails that are used to condition any project approval. I think the pilot should only be 5 or so kiosks, with a check in after those are installed. I also think the public benefit package should be more robust.

On October 3, the Commission will review a report documenting their work and recommendations.