

**FINAL
MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22, 2018 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
109 EAST OLIVE STREET
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. David Stanczak, Mr. Kevin Suess, Ms. Megan Headean, Mr. John Protzman, Mr. Mark Muehleck, Mr. Thomas Kreiger, Ms. Megan McCann, Mr. Tyson Mohr, Mr. Eric Penn, Chairman Justin Boyd

MEMBERS ABSENT: none

OTHERS PRESENT: Ms. Katie Simpson, City Planner; Ms. Izzy Rivera, Assistant City Planner; Mr. Bob Mahrt, Community Development Director; Ms. Vasudha Gadhiraaju, Executive Director for McLean County Regional Planning Commission, Mr. Brad Williams, President of the Dimmitt's Grove Neighborhood Association.

CALL TO ORDER Chairman Boyd called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Ms. Simpson called roll, and a quorum was established with nine members present.

PUBLIC COMMENT: none

MINUTES: The Commission reviewed the minutes from the June 27, 2018 regular meeting. Mr. Penn requested the minutes are changed to show that he was absent from the meeting. Mr. Mohr corrected the spelling of his name and added the word "awareness" to the second paragraph on page three. Mr. Protzman motioned to approve the minutes as corrected; seconded by Mr. Mohr, and approved by voice vote, 10-0.

REGULAR AGENDA: Presentation by Vasudha Gadhiraaju, Executive Director McLean County Regional Planning Commission on the Dimmitt's Grove Neighborhood Plan, prepared July 2016.

Chairman Boyd introduced the item. Ms. Simpson stated the Dimmitt's Grove Neighborhood Plan was drafted in 2016 concurrently with the Comprehensive Plan planning process and therefore used similar, if not the same data sets. She stated the Dimmitt's Grove Neighborhood Association (DGNA) is present and can discuss their implementation successes and strategies. Ms. Simpson stated that DGNA adopted the plan in July 2017 and, although the plan belongs to the neighborhood association, the Planning Commission has been asked to review the plan. She stated staff may bring the plan back to the Commission for possible action. She said that if the Commission wishes to act on the Plan, staff recommends that the Plan be acknowledged by the City. Ms. Simpson requested that the Commissioners walk the neighborhood while reviewing the Plan and provide any feedback they feel is necessary. She stated that City staff are also performing a review of the document. Ms. Simpson explained that October is National Community Planning Month and mentioned that the Neighborhood Plan could be a good topic of

discussion for that month. Ms. Simpson shared a map of the neighborhood and explained Dimmitt's Grove is approximately 60 acres located southeast of the Downtown Area. Ms. Simpson introduced Ms. Vasudha Gadhiraju, Executive Director of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission. Ms. Gadhiraju would explain the planning process used to develop the Neighborhood Plan. Chairman Boyd clarified that the Commission should hold formal discussion until a later meeting.

Ms. Gadhiraju thanked the Commission for their time. She explained that Bloomington Comprehensive Plan planning process involved extensive outreach and that it was identified that neighborhood level planning for historic areas appeared to be nonexistent in the community. Ms. Gadhiraju explained that neighborhood level planning is important because municipalities can share the responsibility for implementing the Comprehensive Plan with community members. She explained that Dimmitt's Grove neighbors approached McLean County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC) and volunteered to be the pilot for this project. Ms. Gadhiraju said it is common to conduct pilot projects concurrently with comprehensive planning. She stated that the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee approved MCRPC's request to move forward with the pilot project and noted that, due to the complexity of the task, the planning process could extend beyond the timeframe of the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Gadhiraju explained a timeline for the project, which finished in July 2016. She explained the existing conditions analysis process and encouraged the Commissioners to walk the neighborhood. She stated that time was spent reviewing, mapping and documenting the history of the neighborhood. She stated they used qualitative, quantitative and spatial analysis, and that the maps and charts are included in the appendices.

Ms. Gadhiraju described the outreach process, which was led by DGNA members and block captains. She explained MCRPC held one-on-one meetings with the neighborhood members and conducted a community mapping project. This information was used to create a vision and identify goals. She explained MCRPC used S.W.O.T. (Strengths. Weaknesses. Opportunities. And Threats) survey tool methodology and provided open ended questions to survey respondents. Ms. Gadhiraju identified a lack of responses from renters but felt that overall, the responses collected represented the sentiments of long term residents. She stated the longstanding history, architecture and walkability are key strengths. She stated that Dimmitt's Grove is unique for its diverse occupations, income levels and household types. She stated the neighborhood is affordable and has a strong sense of community—two key strengths. She referenced the chart on pages 88-90 of the plan, and identified a few weaknesses. She stated the weaknesses are not unique to Dimmitt's Grove but can be found throughout Bloomington, specifically the preservation and regeneration neighborhoods in general. These areas were directly impacted by development on the east side of Bloomington.

Ms. Gadhiraju stated that a key challenge in this Dimmitt's Grove neighborhood identified in the plan is school districts. She stated that the neighborhood's assigned school is not within walking distance to the neighborhood. Chairman Boyd asked what school serves the neighborhood. Ms. Gadhiraju stated that Sheridan Elementary School serves the area. Ms. Gadhiraju read the vision created from the plan. She stated the goals in the plan capitalize on the strengths and opportunities and identify ways to address the weaknesses and threats. Ms. Gadhiraju identified preservation of the neighborhood character as a common need throughout the community. She briefly discussed the organization of the plan and emphasized the neighborhood wished to focus on the neighborhood assets. She referenced the implementation matrix attached to the end of the

document and highlighted the work assigned to DGNA. She stated that the goals identifying the City as the lead agency are identified in the Comprehensive Plan and complement the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Gadhiraaju shared a map from the Comprehensive Plan illustrating the Regeneration, Preservation and Stabilization areas in Bloomington. She stated this Dimmitt's Grove Plan is the first, pilot plan in the preservation areas. She stated while the Regeneration Area, located west of Main St, created a plan using Community Development Block Grant funding and has focused on revitalizing the area, the Dimmitt's Grove pilot study focused on the preservation of the neighborhood and incorporated preservation area goals from the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Brad Williams, President of the Dimmitt's Grove Neighborhood Association, thanked the members of Association present. He acknowledged former DGNA leadership and recognized the association for its strength and organization. Mr. Williams introduced Mr. Carlo Robustelli to share the neighborhood's perspective and provide an update. Mr. Robustelli stated that the Association understands the Dimmitt's Grove Plan is a guide intended to be used as change progresses. He hoped the neighborhood's interests would be factored into larger city plans and that the Dimmitt's Grove Neighborhood Plan could serve as a reference and roadmap for decision makers. Mr. Robustelli stated he thinks the neighborhood would be supportive of staff's recommended action. He described the neighborhood's progress towards implementing the goals of the plan. The neighborhood, he stated, formed working committees focused on tackling each goal. Mr. Robustelli provided examples including the historic marker project, updating the Association's website, and working with Illinois Wesleyan Students to identify and inventory the quality of infrastructure. The students, Mr. Robustelli explained, submitted infrastructure conditions to the City via the MyBloomington App. He stated that the Association organized a neighborhood walking tour and hosted a Day in Dimmitt's Grove activity to try and attract people to the neighborhood. He stated the neighborhood established a Block Captain system and emphasized the strong relationships the neighborhood has with various departments. He stated he hopes the plan is seen as a value added to the community.

Ms. Pamela Eaton, resident, spoke in favor of the plan. She explained the history of the neighborhood association. She described the neighborhood as active and explained two alderman and one county board member reside in the neighborhood. She stated the neighborhood served as a pilot for the recycling project. She hoped the pilot plan would inspire other neighborhoods to become organized and could serve as a guide for future associations. She recognized the relationship between safety and neighborhood organization.

Ms. Simpson highlighted accomplishments the City has made in Dimmitt's Grove over the past two years. She stated the Dimmitt's Grove Plan is available on the Planning and Zoning website. She described the collaboration between owners of historic properties and the Historic Preservation Commission. She stated the City intends to issue an RFP later this year to update the City Historic Preservation Plan. She highlighted the comprehensive zoning text amendment that the Planning Commission, staff and consultants have been working on for the past year. She stated the text amendment would reduce the required lot sizes and would eliminate nonconforming lots in Dimmitt's Grove. She stated that the City has invested close to \$150,000.00 in the Dimmitt's Grove area to improve water and sewer mains and services, to test for lead, and to improve the Marie Litte Park. Ms. Simpson stated that approximately \$100,000.00 was invested in the adjacent neighborhood as well. Ms. Simpson stated that even though the Dimmitt's Grove Plan has not been formally acknowledged by the City, the city is

aware of concerns of the neighborhoods and is investing in the area. She stated acknowledgement of the plan would simply formalize the efforts staff and the city are making in Dimmitt's Grove.

Ms. Simpson asked the Commission to review the plan, walk the neighborhood, and gather any feedback they might like to include in the Plan over the next month. She stated that tentatively, the Planning Commission could hold discussion and possible action on the plan in October, most likely the meeting on October 10, but that the date would depend on the Zoning Ordinance public hearing.

OLD BUSINESS:

Chairman Boyd distributed a memo that he prepared to the Planning Commission. Chairman Boyd stated that he met with several beekeepers since the last meeting to discuss the proposed beekeeping language in the ordinance and that the memo covers their comments.

Chairman Boyd asked for clarification on whether the Planning Commission needs to elect a secretary, and if this is a state mandate. Ms. Simpson stated that staff would do some research and that would have a response, either at the next meeting, or at the zoning ordinance public hearing.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m. by unanimous voice vote; motioned by Mr. Krieger. Seconded by Mr. Stanczak.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Simpson,
City Planner