

MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2014, 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
109 EAST OLIVE STREET, BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Stuckey, Mr. Schulz, Mr. Balmer, Mr. Pearson, Mr. Stanczak, Mr. Scritchlow, Mr. Cornell, Mr. Cain

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Wills, Mr. Diamond

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Mark Woolard, City Planner
Mr. Frank Koehler, Interim Director of Planning and Code Enforcement

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Cain called the meeting to order at 4:03 P.M.

ROLL CALL: Mr. Woolard called the roll. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

MINUTES: The Commission reviewed and approved the January 22, 2014 minutes as written.

Mr. Stanczak moved to approve the January 22, 2014 minutes as written. Mr. Balmer seconded the motion which passed 8-0 with following votes being cast on roll call: Mr. Stuckey--yes; Mr. Schulz--yes; Mr. Balmer--yes; Mr. Pearson--yes; Mr. Stanczak--yes; Mr. Scritchlow--yes; Mr. Cornell--yes; Mr. Cain--Yes; Mr. Diamond--absent; Mr. Wills--absent

REGULAR AGENDA:

Discussion on Visioning and Comprehensive Planning: Mr. Woolard introduced the discussion on the City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Woolard stated the previous presentation on planning and visioning from a consultant was going to council, but there was concern that the consultant may be less experienced and knowledgeable with previous plans. Vasudha Pinnamaraju, AICP, McLean Country Regional Planning Commission Executive Director, brings her experience from Decatur. Chairman Cain welcomed Ms. Pinnamaraju.

Ms. Pinnamaraju invited the commission's involvement during the scope of work. Staff has expressed the need for this to be a community driven process. Ms. Pinnamaraju understands the importance comprehensive plans have in guiding regulation and the plan needs to be practical and applicable. The scope of work for the work on the plan includes four distinct phases. The existing conditions analysis is the first. This is a summary of existing plans and a snapshot of where we are today. The second phase is community visioning. How do we get there is phase three, strategic planning. Phase four is ironing out the details with what kind of projects should be done to attain the vision. This will include revisions from the boards and commissions throughout the process.

Phase one, the existing condition analysis, will be done in two parts. A review of existing studies and plans will be summarized. This will include not only local, but state and national plans and how will they affect Bloomington and the policies going forward. There will also be a review of neighboring communities. This will be a broader plan rather than focusing on our own plan in isolation. The second part of this phase will be data collection and analysis. Censuses data will continue to be used along with relevant data out there to better arrive at custom solutions to Bloomington. We want to be sure the broad picture is accurate with an eye to exception areas. Policies which are evidence based with data will be more credible.

The next step is to establish a steering committee and an advisory committee. The steering committee would be the city political leadership, staff, department heads, commission members and those that are interested in leading this project forward. The advisory council is made up of community members who are important for the buy-in. This would be made of the members of the school district and major employers. This builds credibility for the comprehensive plan.

Phase two is the visioning process. The goal is to reach as many people as we can. We want to reach stakeholders where they already are like parent-teacher meetings, church groups and aldermen outreach efforts. We are going to target interactions through the business community, residents and institutions. A sample promotional video portrayed the importance of each person's involvement. There will be a variety of tools for people to use.

Phase three is strategic planning that finds ways to get there. There are cities similar to Bloomington which provides a model for success, failures, growth and other areas. Other cities best practices can be translated into our community. There will be seven action areas to help engage people and each section will have a working group to address the issues.

Phase four is plan making and adoption. This is the time when the plan goes through the channels for feedback, approval and adoptions. The entire process will take 18 months with a final project completed by June 2015.

Mr. Pearson complemented the search for empirical data and questioned the best practices for projecting out 20 years. Five years seemed more reasonable to address the changing times. Ms. Pinnamaraju acknowledged the search for data as well as something to be said about sentiments. It's important to look beyond the numbers. From a planning perspective, it is our job to tell you what is going on and then policy makers can make informed choices based on known facts.

A comprehensive plan can lose relevance through the years and many items seem relatively useless. Ms. Pinnamaraju stated that a planning trend across the nation is scenario planning because it's hard to predict five years down the road. Different scenarios are measured by outcomes with triggers points to guide decision makers. Bloomington is still one of those communities who have a predominate employer driving this. The comprehensive plan will include scenario planning.

Mr. Scritchlow inquired about the age of the data and expressed concern over validity. Ms. Pinnamaraju concurred stating the final utilized data will be based on the most accurate and timely. Mr. Pearson and Mr. Cornell inquired about the demographics of the goal to reach 30% or 22,000 people. Ms. Pinnamaraju pointed to the mindmixer tool which breaks down the age, gender and other demographics for a measure. There are other tools that will be used in order to capture and validate the data. A discussion ensued regarding to whom the target of 30% should include such as children and teenagers. Chairman Cain suggested a weighted scale to measure to make sure the sample accurately reflects the population. Quality of life should be a large part of this plan as that is the part that will attract new business.

The next steps includes steering and advisory committees. The Regional Planning Commission will continue to put together the existing analysis and hope for a presentation in June. The population of these committees will be occurring soon. Mr. Woolard invited recommendations of community members who would be good to serve. Chairman Cain requested monthly updates for the commission.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: Mr. Woolard introduced the Interim Director of Planning and Code Enforcement, Frank Koehler. Mr. Koehler stated he brings over 35 years of government experience and is filling in as the department transitions into community service. He looks forward to working with this commission and sees great opportunity in the upcoming process.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come to the Bloomington Planning Commission's attention, Mr. Schultz moved to adjourn this meeting and Mr. Balmer seconded the motion which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5.12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Woolard, City Planner

For further information contact:

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