

**MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2020 4:00 P.M.
OSBORN ROOM, BLOOMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT
305 S. EAST STREET
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. David Stanczak; Mr. Justin Boyd; Mr. Thomas Krieger; Mr. Mark Muehleck; Vice Chair Tyson Mohr; Mr. Kevin Suess; Ms. Megan McCann; Mr. Eric Penn

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. John Protzman; Chairperson Megan Headean

OTHERS PRESENT: Ms. Katie Simpson, City Planner; Ms. Casey Weeks, Assistant City Planner; Mr. Bob Marht, Community Development Director; Mr. George Boyle, Assistant Corporate Counsel; Mr. John Houseal, FAICP, Principal Houseal Lavigne Associates; Ms. Jackie Wells, AICP Houseal Lavigne Associates.

CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chair Tyson Mohr called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM Ms. Simpson called roll. With eight members present, the Commission established a quorum.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Karen Schmidt, 409 E. Grove Street, homeowner and property owner. Concerned about intention statement which allows for conversion of detached single family to multi-family and office uses to extend the economic life of the building to allow owners to justify repairs and modernization costs. She doesn't think the conversion of homes to office uses is a good idea. She would like to see the city have a public hearing when converting single-family to multi-family within R-3B zoned properties. Her decision to not convert a single-family home into multi-family units proved beneficial to the neighborhood and tax assessment value of the property.

Greg Koos, 305 Woodland Ave, the highest and best use of a house should be a house and not offices. Allowing houses to be used as office space will contribute to a decline in property value and desirability. The intention to extend the economic life of a houses to be converted into offices providing for investment in repairs and modernization is misguided and ignores the past 30 years of experience in historic preservation and needs to be grounded in a study such as the one done for Dimmitt's Grove to enhance the tax base and applied more broadly throughout the city.

MINUTES: Review and approval the minutes of the January 22, 2020 regular meeting minutes.

Vice Chair Mohr asked if there were any amendments to the meeting minutes from January 22, 2020. There were no amendments, a motion was made by Mr. Krieger to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Muehleck. The minutes were approved by voice vote (8-0-0).

REGULAR AGENDA:

A. Presentation and discussion by John Houseal, Principal, Houseal Lavigne Associates on the sign code survey results and additional recommendations.

John Houseal and Jackie Wells gave a presentation on the results of the sign survey and draft ordinance. This is a discussion to let you know where are heads are at as we are working on the drafts. An online questionnaire in English and Spanish was available September through December 2019.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, it is recommended that the City consider the following revisions to the Draft Sign Ordinance presented to the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals at the joint meeting held on September 11, 2019.

The sign Ordinance Questionnaire feedback came from 53% Bloomington residents, 23% Bloomington resident and Bloomington business owner, 16% Bloomington business owner, and 8% other. Question 2 was if you are a business owner, where in Bloomington is your business located? 25% said Downtown Bloomington business owners, 22% Veterans Parkway business owners, and 53% other places in Bloomington.

Question three was: I think existing signs in Downtown Bloomington... 30 responses said they enhance the image and character of the Downtown, under 10 responses said they detract from the image and character of the Downtown, 20 responses said don't impact the image and character Downtown, less than five responses said other.

For Downtown signs, we gave three examples of scaled signs proportional to the building's façade at 5%, 10%, and 20%. Choice 2 with 10% sign coverage had the most with over 30 votes, the second highest vote was Choice 1 with 5% sign coverage with 20 votes. Existing signs within the Downtown were voted to have just the right size with 40 votes.

Votes for Question 6: I think signs along Veterans Parkway...Don't impact the image and character of the corridor had the most with 25 votes. Detract from the image and character of the corridor had the second highest vote with over 20. Question 7: I think existing signs along Veterans Parkway...Are just right had the most votes at over 30. Votes for too big and create 'visual clutter' had the second highest amount of votes with over 15 for each. A visual diagram showing percentages of sign coverage according to 5%, 10%, and 20% of façade coverage allowed surveyors to choose which scale seemed most appropriate. Choice two received the most votes with 35. Choice 3 came in second.

For questions 9 and 10 the size of signs were voted to be generally just right. Comments were made regarding what makes signs a hazard or distraction which usually mentioned animation or signs blocking oncoming traffic. Electronic message board signs were voted to be distracting with over 25 votes. Comments regarding what other sign related ideas would you like to share with us are included in the report.

Recommendations based on feedback:

1. **14-4(D)(1):** Increase the amount of permitted sign area for wall signs from five percent of the total area of the face of the wall on which the sign shall be located to 10 percent of the total area of the face of the wall on which the sign shall be located in the B-1, B-2, C-1, M-1, and M-2 zoning districts.
2. **14-5:** Consider including provisions for the regulation of feather signs.
3. **14-5(a):** Differentiate between wall mounted banner signs and ground mounted banner signs to allow for greater flexibility in the allowance of temporary signs.
4. **14-7(C)(4)(c):** Increase the maximum frequency for electronic message center message transitions from two minutes to 30 seconds.

Current signs in Downtown cover about 5% of the façade for the wall mounted signs. So they do not recommend increasing the sign size.

Vice Chair Mohr asked for input regarding the amortization of signs and examples of what other communities have done. Amortization is a policy decision and a means which signs can be grandfathered in. Junk yards and billboards are the best examples of amortization. Junk yards have been given 8 years to relocate. Billboards are an example. Communities gave a period of time 5-7 years to get rid of them. Some codes have banned pylon signs. Some codes allow signs to be maintained, but do not allow for changes. Amortization is a policy driven decision.

The current draft does not contain a period of amortization scheduled. An owner would not be required to take a sign down unless it lost its legal non-conforming status, then the City could force the sign to be removed. Ms. Simpson is familiar with only one sign that was legal non-conforming and the City asked them to remove the sign, since it was not maintained.

B. Presentation and discussion by John Houseal, Principal, Houseal Lavigne Associates on the downtown R-3B density analysis and recommendations.

Existing zoning and the existing plan doesn't express what is currently there. Residents expressed that the current zoning misrepresents the neighborhood. The R-3B near the Downtown are the only R-3B sites in question. It is a disjointed district. What we are recommending that two pieces to the north be rezoned, since they are different from the other areas. The two pieces northeast of Downtown be rezoned to R-2 Mixed Residence District, the area on the northside of Downtown be rezoned D-2 Downtown Transitional District, and the areas on each side of Downtown be rezoned R-D Downtown Residence District.

When buildings were initially built there were 190 single-family detached homes in these areas. Currently, 135 are used for single-family homes. Of the single-family structures 55 are being used for something other than what they were

intended for and are no longer single family. Of the 55 structures 18 were a permitted use allowed by the City. Fifteen multi-family buildings exist by design and as permitted. 68 multi-family dwellings now exist. Single-family homes were converted to something other than single-family including two to three units or apartment complexes, whether they were legal or not. This leaves the neighborhood with lack of parking, using buildings in a way that was not intended or designed for. We are accommodating for what currently exists and allow for future investment.

Rezone the R-3B on both sides of the Downtown to:

R-D Downtown Neighborhood Residence District. The R-D Downtown Neighborhood Residence District is intended to accommodate development characterized by a mixture of housing types including single-family detached homes, single-family attached homes, and low intensity multifamily buildings. This district allows for the conversion of single-family detached properties to multifamily or office uses to extend the economic life of the structures and allow owners to justify expenditures or repairs and modernization.

Residential conversions permit two units with use provisions, more than two units require a special use permit. Office conversions are permitted with use provisions.

Bulk and site standards are not consistent within the district. This rezone is proposing minimum lot widths that reflect lots on the opposite side of the street. See Bulk and Site Standards (Section 4-3) Lot Characteristics. The minimum lot area per multifamily unit shall be one thousand (1,000) square feet. This requirement does not currently exist. This does not mean the unit has to be one thousand square feet, but if I want to build a five-unit building, I have to have at least a five thousand square feet lot. This will not allow a lot of multifamily developments.

There is also a reduction in maximum height allowance. Each dwelling unit has to have at least one off-street parking space per unit. Tandem parking does not count. Office uses shall be permitted one monument sign.

New single-family construction shall be similar in character to abutting properties including roof pitch, eaves, building materials, windows, trim, color, and landscaping. New multifamily construction shall be similar in character to abutting properties including roof pitch, eaves, building materials, windows, trim, color, and landscaping.

A detailed inventory needs to be done within these neighborhoods. We need to know how many parking spaces there are for each unit, how many units per building, how many lots on each block. There is a need to establish what is legal and what isn't. If a conversion was not permitted that needs to be documented. If this proposal is adopted the City must do a hyper detailed inventory of the existing conditions – parking, units, driveways, unit size, recorded with a date stamp. There is currently no homogenous development making this neighborhood difficult to zone. This plan tries to protect what is there and accommodate for new investment and reinvestment into existing properties.

This proposal is more restrictive in that it allows for a mix of residential increase the standard for new construction and conversion over time. Since it is near Downtown, this plan will allow for small scale single-family.

Design guidelines within this plan address parking in front of buildings and garages in front yards which are not characteristics of this neighborhood. The old plan prioritizes new construction.

Resident, Karen Schmidt commented she likes the use of the design guidelines to address some of the issues, but she is not in favor of allowing office use within the neighborhoods.

Under this plan a special use is required for office conversion.

Resident, Brad Williams, President of Dimmitt's Grove Neighborhood Association, residents want to preserve what is existing. Residents want to protect what they have and are paranoid of changes and that changes are done within code regulations. As an expert in historic construction, the materials that these homes are built with are very high quality.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Tentatively February 26, 2020 presentation by the Lakota Group on the Bloomington Community Preservation Plan.

Mr. Eric Penn is resigning from his appointed position as a member of the Planning Commission following this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 pm by voice vote, motioned by Mr. Boyd, and seconded by Mr. Mohr.

Respectfully submitted,
Casey Weeks
Assistant City Planner