

MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2014, 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
109 EAST OLIVE STREET, BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Stan Cain, Mr. Ryan Scritchlow, Mr. J Balmer, Mr. Christopher Cornell, Mr. Jim Pearson, Mr. Robert Wills, Mr. David Stanczak, Mr. Charles Stuckey, Mr. Bill Schulz

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Rex Diamond

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Mark Woolard, City Planner
Mr. Mark Huber, Director P.A.C.E.
Mr. David Hales, City Manager
Mayor Renner

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Cain called the meeting to order at 4:02 P.M.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

MINUTES: The Commission reviewed the October 23, 2013 minutes.

Mr. Balmer moved to approve the October 23, 2013 minutes as written. Mr. Cornell seconded the motion which passed 9-0 with following votes being cast on roll call: Mr. Balmer--yes; Mr. Scritchlow--yes; Mr. Cain--Yes; Mr. Cornell--yes; Mr. Stuckey--yes; Mr. Wills--yes; Mr. Pearson--yes; Mr. Schulz--present; Mr. Stanczak--yes; Mr. Diamond--absent.

REGULAR AGENDA:

Presentation on Visioning and Comprehensive Planning – Houseal Lavigne Associates: Mr.

Woolard stated the city is preparing to create a citywide robust vision and new comprehensive plan. He explained we have reviewed proposals and asked Houseal Lavigne Associates to make a presentation to the Planning Commission. Mr. Woolard introduced City of Bloomington Manager, David Hales. Mr. Hales thanked the commissioners for the service provided to the city. Mr. Hales explained as we have by working with staff and commissions that we see that the current comprehensive plan has not been suiting our needs. It has not been a good tool to help in policy decision making. There are many good positive aspects; unfortunately there have been too many challenges or issues that have been very difficult for both the planning commission and city council to work through when new proposals for undeveloped land around existing residential development. As discussions continue with staff, one thing that keeps coming back is a comprehensive plan should be a document which gives guidance. He questioned, what is our vision for undeveloped land and what do we hope to see in the way of the new developments in different quadrants of the city. Not all blame can be on the comprehensive plan. The City of Bloomington's zoning code is extremely outdated. Some of the business zones on the East side allow everything from commercial to multifamily development. Consequently, it's a recipe for unpleasant confrontations and disputes between a developer who wants to maximize profits and the existing residents to maintain the character, lifestyle and integrity of the area.

We are not only looking for an updated comprehensive plan, we are looking for something new, exciting and is going to be a quantum leap from what we have had. I applaud the Planning Commission for the efforts a few years ago in the outreach to the City of Peoria in learning their comprehensive planning.

He explained the need for extensive citizen involvement and everyone who has a stake in our future growth. The city council has proposed funding for a community visioning process and at the same time, Regional Planning Commission, as our long range planner, typically prepare these comprehensive plans. As we investigated how to marry the two and maybe interact the two, we talked to many consultants. We were extremely impressed by Houseal Lavigne and Associates and what they could bring to our community vision. As we continued to listen and learn through their discussion on the fifty some comprehensive planning projects, the APA recognition and award for an emerging planning firm, and other planning awards, Houseal Lavigne and Associates is the go-to entity. We are just impressed by all we continue to learn about them.

We have great staff at the Regional Planning Commission and we want to blend the two entities with; great collaboration. Houseal Lavigne could lead the comprehensive planning with Regional Planning in a team, supportive role resulting in an outstanding product. We need to set our sights and aspirations really high. Until high citizen engagement becomes a part of the product, we aren't going to achieve our ultimate goal. We have a great team here. Houseal Lavigne has lead amazing citizen engagements in multiple ways.

Chairman Cain welcomed John Houseal, 342 Gale Ave, River Forest, IL and Devin Lavigne, 1235 Webster Street, Naperville, IL. both cofounders Houseal Lavigne Associates. They presented the firm history, experience, the initial understandings of the community, items to address and embrace as a part of the planning process and an overview of the proposed planning process. The firms founding principles evolved from their experience of wanting better community engagement, a commitment to creativity, graphic communication, technology integration and client satisfaction which all led to the firm's success.

Mr. Houseal recognized Bloomington as a community of excellence and the envy of many surrounding communities. The plan should reflect said excellence.

These were the initial observations of this community which included challenges and building opportunities. Embracing the partnership with Normal through the Constitution Trail project has helped develop the idea of conductivity through a regional network and adjacent partnership. There is a unique asset and challenge of the local student population. The downtown is the envy of many towns around however but it is hidden jewel which could be easily missed. Veterans Parkway is a major retail corridor to this regional area. Corridor planning is a key to the comprehensive plan.

There is a vacant property across from Meijer which is zoned industrial, planned for commercial and adjacent to a high end residence. It would be good to have an articulated vision. It doesn't give a level of fair certainty to a developer proposing something or assurance to the residents residing adjacent. That puts the city in an awkward position since the zoning and potential development doesn't dovetail. A proactive plan would set the agenda for development, rather than reaction and allowing another set the agenda.

The Central Illinois Regional Airport is a huge economic development asset with some delicate balancing. Corporate citizens such as State Farm and Country Financial are crucial stake holders. There is a need to sit down with them one on one to find out what is good, bad and ugly. This could provide information on how to attract other corporate tenants. We want to build on the momentum which is already in place through the awards such as the top 100 smartest cities in the US, best places to live, etc.

Mr. Houseal explained many comprehensive plans which they developed examples of their ability to embrace the uniqueness of the community by engaging their citizens for the ultimate goal of planning as defined by the community members themselves. The comprehensive plan allows the reality to be shown and transformed which means visualizing opportunities.

Planning has to do three things. The establishment of where you are right now. Articulating the good, bad and the ugly which include strengths and weaknesses and what can be leveraged and what is holding back. Once the vision is identified, then the plan establishes how we get there.

Mr. Pearson inquired about an approximate time frame for plan completion. Mr. Houseal mentioned approximately 1.5 years. Mr. Schulz asked who is used for engaging the community. Mr. Houseal stated even though the firm is prepared to do all themselves, each community is unique and open to any creative partnering from the community. Much discussion ensued about analyzing existing data, process, zoning, taxes, and a steering committee. Mr. Houseal explained their firm offers to share their experiences with projects implemented and ideas that may work well in this area. This is not available from regional firms. Mr. Houseal expressed interest and excitement at the prospect of working on the comprehensive plan and thanked everyone for their time.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Election of Officers: Chairman Cain introduced this and invited nominations. Mr. Schulz nominated Mr. Cain for Chairman and Mr. Stanczak seconded the motion. Mr. Balmer nominated Mr. Stuckey for Vice Chairman. Mr. Stanczak seconded the motion. Mr. Woolard called roll on both offices nominations. The motion passed 9-0 with following votes being cast on roll call: Mr. Stuckey--yes; Mr. Schulz--yes; Mr. Wills--yes; Mr. Balmer--yes; Mr. Pearson--yes; Mr. Stanczak--yes; Mr. Scritchlow--yes; Mr. Cornell--yes; Mr. Cain--Yes; Mr. Diamond--absent.

There was discussion on the new commissioner term limits the loss of experience, the start date, limits of nine consecutive years and the terms as they will apply. Mr. Scritchlow inquired about the comprehensive plan process and expressed concern over the loss of experienced members who have been through this process before.

Mr. Huber stated in the past, the comprehensive plan was completed by the Regional Planning Commission. Chairman Cain pointed to Peoria's most recent comprehensive plan and the change in detail and community outreach. Over the last few years with Mr. Hale's guidance and Peoria's experience, it has become apparent the next comprehensive plan will be different than before.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come to the Bloomington Planning Commission's attention, Mr. Balmer moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Schulz seconded the motion which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Woolard, City Planner

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