



Approved

MINUTES

CITY OF DUBUQUE LONG RANGE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMISSION REGULAR SESSION

5:30 p.m., Wednesday, September 16, 2009
City Council Chamber, Historic Federal Building
350 W. 6th Street, Dubuque, Iowa

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Jim Prochaska; Commissioners Richard Van Iten, Dirk Voetberg, Chad Darter and Charles Winterwood.

Commissioners Excused: Commissioner Alan Vincent.

Staff Member Present: David Johnson

CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE: Staff presented an Affidavit of Compliance verifying that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Iowa Open Meetings Law.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Prochaska at 5:32 p.m.

MINUTES: Motion by Van Iten, seconded by Voetberg, to approve the minutes of April 15, 2009, as submitted. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Prochaska, Van Iten, Voetberg, Darter and Winterwood; Nay – None.

PUBLIC HEARING

Rebuild Iowa Office (RIO) Smart Growth Green Paper: "Recovering from the Storms, Planning for the Future: A Safer, Smarter, Stronger Iowa"

Chairperson Prochaska opened the public hearing. Staff Member Johnson explained the purpose of the RIO Green Paper is to develop a statewide planning framework that embraces smart growth principles, includes an action plan with implementation strategies and offers a structure to support the planning process.

Staff Member Johnson reviewed the timeline for the Rebuild Iowa Office. He stated that the Planning Services Department has been asked to draft a position statement for the City on the RIO Green Paper for consideration by City Council. He noted City staff and key city departments have reviewed and discussed the RIO Green Paper and have already responded to the questions outlined in Appendix H.

Chairperson Prochaska asked if there were any public who wished to ask questions or comment on the Green Paper. No one from the public was present at the public hearing. Chairperson Prochaska closed the public comment session of the public hearing.

Staff Member Johnson explained City staff is requesting that the Long Range Planning Advisory Commission respond to the questions outlined in Appendix H and those comments will be forwarded to City Council. The Commission reviewed Appendix H. They noted that the City's established principles regarding sustainability concepts and investment decision making are not mandatory. The Commission noted one such guiding principle—the Comprehensive Plan has community indicators which measure compliance. The Commission also noted the sustainable Dubuque initiative as a guiding principle of sustainability in the City.

The Commission did not have any strategies to add to the proposed framework. The Commission did note that the Vision 2000 and Envision 2010 projects were successful in gathering public input.

The Commission discussed the proposed regional planning structure for Iowa. They noted the proposed regions are too large. The Commission stated issues facing one community will be different than issues facing other communities within the same region.

Staff Member Johnson noted staff's review and recommendation of the regions were similar. He explained staff has recommended Iowa's Councils of Governments (COGs) as the regions. He noted that Councils of Government are more geographically appropriate for development and implementation of planning frameworks, best management practices and any implementation strategies. He also noted that COGs are already staffed and have an understanding of their region.

The Commission next discussed local planning issues. The consensus of the Commission was that a statewide hazard identification and mitigation plan could be incorporated into the City of Dubuque Comprehensive Plan. The Commission noted they would need more information. The Commission requested staff provide them with the current local hazard mitigation or emergency management plan in place for the City.

The Commission discussed how to improve public participation throughout the Comprehensive Plan update process. The Commission noted that public participation has been steadily decreasing with each plan update. The Commission suggested staffing a booth for each one of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan at future City Expos. The Commission also suggested taking better advantage of City Channel 8. Commissioner Van Iten suggested televising a series of City programs which highlight the importance of the planning process as well as a program on the history of planning approaches in the City.

Commissioner Voetberg stressed the importance of reminding people that many of the successes that Dubuque has had is the product of efforts that involve community input.

By consensus, the Commission recommended forwarding the RIO Green paper comments to City Council.

ACTION ITEMS

Downtown Urban Renew District Amendment

David Heiar, Economic Development Director, presented the amendment. He referred to the dark blue area on the map which is the Cable Car Square Sub Area and the requested amendment. He explained the request was initiated to create downtown housing options, which are critical to the growth of downtown. He explained he met with property owners and stated those property owners support the amendment to include the Cable Car Square Sub Area.

Commissioner Prochaska questioned the square area omitted on the map. Staff Member Heiar explained that it is church property.

Commissioner Van Iten noted other locations where the urban renewal district would have relevance and potential for consideration based on the principles outlined in the current request. Staff Member Heiar stated that several amendments have happened in the district over time. He explained expansion of a district happens on a request basis.

Staff Member Heiar explained the importance of providing incentives versus the potential of abusing urban renewal incentives and fiscal responsibility. He explained if a property owner were to approach the City, the City would evaluate the request on its merit and amend the district, as needed.

Commissioner Van Iten stated the principles for expanding the district are positive and should be widely known throughout the City. He asked what outreach the City does to the private sector. Staff Member Heiar explained the program is promoted, but reiterated, handled at the request of property owners.

Commissioner Van Iten quested whether any property owners opposed the request. Staff Member Heiar explained that there was unanimous support from all those property owners who attended the meeting.

Commissioner Prochaska asked whether St. Raphael Cathedral representatives were invited to the meeting. Staff Member Heiar explained that they were invited; however, no one was present. He explained the church was omitted from the request because there is no direct benefit to a church.

Staff Member Heiar explained the church is eligible for inclusion in the district, if they so choose. He explained that the church does not have to approve the amendment, though being located in an urban renewal district does not grant the City the ability to impose

anything. Staff Member Heiar stated the urban renewal district provides financial incentives for those properties eligible and interested in utilizing them.

Commissioner Voetberg reiterated being located in an urban renewal district does not grant the City any additional authority. Commissioner Van Iten questioned who makes the findings outlined in the economic development staff report. Commissioner Voetberg explained the City Council makes findings based on the input of City staff.

Motion by Winterwood, seconded by Darter, to recommend to City Council that the Amended and Restated Urban Renewal Plan for the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District be amended to include the Cable Car Square Sub Area. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Van Iten, Voetberg, Darter and Winterwood; Nay – None; Abstain – Prochaska.

East/West Corridor Connectivity Study

Staff Member Johnson explained that HDR Engineering has been retained by the City of Dubuque to perform a study of the East/West Corridors in Dubuque. He explained representatives from HDR Engineering were present to present preliminary study information with regard the four primary corridors identified.

Tara Kramer and Chris Malmberg were present on behalf of HDR Engineering to present the corridor project. Ms. Kramer and Mr. Malmberg reviewed the project and PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Kramer reviewed the process and guidance received from the City Council to date. She reviewed the preliminary corridor findings and explained the need to optimize traffic controls, provide capacity improvements and evaluate complete street options for the corridors. She explained that much detail and attention has been given to the area around Loras Boulevard and University Avenue. She explained that much consideration was also given to traffic improvements along Pennsylvania Avenue. She explained traffic demand management strategies and the need to reduce future peak hours of traffic. She explained that the goal is to reduce peak hour demands.

Chris Malmberg reviewed complete street strategies. He explained the importance of balancing multi-modal transportation options and demands and discussed challenges of walking and biking to places. He explained why complete streets are important to reducing traffic demands and reviewed complete streets options. Mr. Malmberg reviewed the Kennedy and Asbury Road areas as an example. He explained that one of the biggest challenges is working within the existing rights-of-way, without limiting on-street parking opportunities. He explained some options include providing designated bike lanes or shared use buffers. He reviewed the concept of a shared right-of way for vehicles and bikes. He reviewed complete streets alternatives that included parking. He reviewed corridor improvements which included improved signals, roundabouts and street realignments.

Ms. Kramer reviewed the next steps of the project.

The Commission stated they are very supportive of incorporating roundabouts. The Commission stated they feel roundabouts provide the best alternative to keep traffic moving.

Commissioner Van Iten asked whether there was any attempt to assess the current behavioral driving habits of the Dubuque community and how it relates to this study. He asked whether there was any assessment of how driving behaviors need to change and the role that government would play in them.

Ms. Kramer explained consideration was given to the driving habits of the Dubuque community. She explained much consideration was given to the tools that would reduce peak traffic demand. She explained education will be very important to the Dubuque community to promote alternatives such as roundabouts.

Commissioner Van Iten stated he supports introducing perimeter parking facilities to encourage multi-modal transportation.

Commissioner Voetberg explained that the City Council has been looking at transportation issues and alternatives for some time. He explained the importance of balancing actual demands with multi-modal options. He noted the transit system currently is used mostly by those with no other options. He stated he would like public transportation to be the preferred option within the community. Commissioner Voetberg also noted the short trip times and commutes that Dubuque residents currently have, which, consequently, makes it difficult to convince people to take public transportation. He noted that O'Hagen Street does not get a lot of traffic, but when there is traffic, it backs up traffic terribly in the area. He noted that there are businesses dependent on O'Hagen Street and suggested making using that street less attractive. Commissioner Voetberg and the consultants discussed the issue. They agreed a roundabout with a splitter island to allow a right-in and right-out at O'Hagen Street as being a good option.

Commissioner Van Iten again reiterated that those areas with proposed roundabouts are appropriate and would promote ease of traffic flow.

The Commission agreed that using roundabouts in the proposed locations would be a positive improvement.

Commissioner Prochaska suggested contacting the school district with regard to the underutilization of public transportation. He noted that the school district and the City of Dubuque share a common problem in that their transit and school busses are underutilized.

Commissioner Van Iten emphasized the importance of getting the corridor study right the first time to show people there are real alternative solutions to modern-day traffic issues. Commissioner Voetberg questioned a possible concern that if the traffic improvements work too well, more traffic will consequently use the corridor areas instead of Highway 20.

Commissioner Winterwood asked how long the improvements are projected to work until other actions will be needed. Ms. Kramer explained the traffic projections and modeling was to the year 2031.

Commissioner Prochaska asked whether consideration was given to the proposed Southwest Arterial. Ms. Kramer stated that impacts of the Southwest Arterial were part of the traffic demand modeling.

Commissioner Winterwood asked how successful other cities, such as Des Moines, are with traffic management plans. Ms. Kramer explained it depends entirely on education and a community's commitment to sustainable traffic options.

Commissioner Winterwood commended the complete street components of the project.

Commissioner Darter questioned what the preferred option is for complete streets. Mr. Malmberg explained the initial feedback is leaning towards on-street bike lanes, but it is largely dependent on available right-of-way. Commissioner Darter emphasized the important for promoting safe, assessable use of walking and biking options.

Commissioner Prochaska asked whether any parking studies were involved in the project. Ms. Kramer explained parking was considered for the options. Mr. Malmberg explained the goals to incorporate the complete streets concepts without taking parking away from those homes in the project area that are dependent on available on-street parking.

Commissioner Voetberg suggested the consultants prepare a timeline of suggested implementation and priorities to present to City Council. The Commission noted they prefer roundabouts versus signaled intersections. The Commission stated they would give priority to complete streets, roundabouts and redesigning the intersections as proposed.

Staff Member Johnson explained the comments from the Commission will be forwarded to City Project Manager Steve Brown to be incorporated into future discussions as the project moves forward.

The Commission explained that because of the problems associated with the Asbury Road and University Avenue area, priority should be given towards implementing the traffic

management alternatives. They noted the intersection of Asbury Road and University Avenue has to be fixed first and foremost.

LIAISON/SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Enterprise Zone Commission – Elect Liaison

Staff Member Johnson explained that former Commissioner Rick Stein served as the Long Range Planning Advisory Commission representative on the Enterprise Zone Commission. He explained that Mr. Stein did not seek reappointment and the Enterprise Zone Commission is required to have a member of the Long Range Planning Advisory Commission serve on that Commission.

Staff Member Johnson reviewed the Enterprise Zone Commission benefits and requirements and noted that it would be a good opportunity for a Commissioner who is interested in getting more involved in economic development issues.

Motion by Prochaska, seconded by Winterwood, to nominate Commissioner Van Iten as the Long Range Planning Advisory Commission Liaison to serve on the Enterprise Zone Commission. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Prochaska, Voetberg, Darter and Winterwood; Nay – None; Abstain – Van Iten.

Sustainability Task Force

Commissioner Winterwood stated the task force has gone through all elements of the Sustainable Dubuque Initiative and has made recommendations to present to City Council at a later date.

ITEMS FROM COMMISSION:

Commissioner Winterwood noted the recent reporting of a shortage of multi-family housing options in the City. He noted that needs to be considered the next time the Comprehensive Plan is updated.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



David Johnson, Assistant Planner

Adopted—02/17/2010