

MINUTES
CITY OF DUBUQUE LONG RANGE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 20, 2011

City Council Chamber, Historic Federal Building

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

Commissioners Excused: Commissioners John Pregler and Karla Braig.

Staff Members Present: Laura Carstens, Aaron DeJong, David Heiar, Aggie Tauke and David Johnson.

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

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

MINUTES: Motion by Vincent, seconded by Van Iten, to approve the minutes of March 16, 2011, as submitted. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Vincent, Prochaska, Van Iten, and Darter; Nay – None.

The Commission questioned Council Member Braig's liaison position on the Long Range Planning Advisory Commission. Staff Member Carstens explained Council Member Braig is continuing to appeal to the City Council regarding the appropriateness of having a liaison position on the Long Range Planning Advisory Commission. Staff Member Carstens explained Council Member Braig will resign from the Commission if City Council upholds the liaison position.

Commissioner Winterwood entered the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District Expansion: David Heiar, Economic Development Director, presented the proposed expansion to the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District. He explained the expansion would add the Washington Neighborhood, Chaplain Schmitt Island and the Industrial Harbor areas and merge the existing East 7th Street Economic Development District and the Kerper Boulevard Economic Development

District into the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District. He noted several developments have brought about the proposal to amend the district. He explained including the Washington Neighborhood in the district is a result of the Safe Community Task Force's recommendation to promote reinvestment in the downtown neighborhood. He explained expanding the Urban Renewal District would make available additional incentives to help with that investment. He noted the Kerper Boulevard Economic Development District is being merged into the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District because the former district is scheduled to expire in a few years, and incorporating it into the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District will help market the former Dubuque Pack site. He explained the community is in the early stages of developing a master plan to improve Chaplain Schmitt Island. He explained having the island in the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal area will help assist in funding projects and accomplish goals that will be identified in the Master Plan. He reviewed the benefits of being located in an Urban Renewal District. He explained Tax Increment Financing and various other housing incentives that benefit properties.

The Commission discussed nuisance properties. Staff Member Heiar explained the financial incentives extended as a result of the Urban Renewal District will assist in some of those property maintenance issues. He explained the incentives will hopefully make a difference before enforcement is needed. Staff Member Carstens explained the financial incentives also serve as an important resource for a number of property owners that are required to make improvements.

The Commission and staff discussed enforcement issues and the benefits of the financial incentives, noting the Washington Neighborhood.

Chairperson Prochaska questioned if the expansion of the district will affect TIF funding in other areas of the City. Staff Member Heiar explained the existing tax base is not impacted and will not affect any other areas.

Commissioner Van Iten supported the request, noting it is a proactive and creative opportunity to promote investment.

The Commission questioned why the Urban Renewal District was not extended north of 25th Street along Central Avenue. The Commission noted how important this corridor is to the City of Dubuque, and explained it is a gateway for many people entering the city from the north. The Commission noted the corridor is in need of investment. Staff Member Heiar noted some of Central Avenue is in, and agreed the Central Avenue corridor could benefit from investment opportunities and is worthy of consideration in the future.

The Commission questioned why Blum Salvage was left out of the district expansion. Staff Member Heiar noted there are current negotiations as part of the Bee Branch Project for acquisition of the property, and it would be beneficial to leave the property out of the expansion at this point in time.

Chairperson Prochaska asked whether the district could be expanded to 32nd Street. Staff Member Heiar explained it is important to use Tax Increment Financing responsibly. He noted there will always be some who disagree with how the Tax Increment is established and used or not used. Assistant Economic Development Director Aaron DeJong reviewed the boundary justifications. He explained it is important to be judicious in selecting where the Urban Renewal Districts are established and expanded, and where incentives are available. He emphasized the importance of focusing financial resources in areas of greatest need.

Motion by Van Iten, seconded by Vincent, to recommend approval of the proposed expansion of the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District as presented. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye: Vincent, Prochaska, Van Iten, Darter and Winterwood; Nay – None.

Paragon Square Urban Revitalization Plan (former Holy Ghost School at 2887-2921 Central Avenue): Community Development Specialist Aggie Tauke presented the Paragon Square Urban Revitalization area plan. Staff Member Tauke reviewed the plan and noted the plan will provide incentives for the rehabilitation of the former Holy Ghost Convent Building and the former Holy Ghost Assisi School Building. She explained both buildings are currently vacant and the buildings will be rehabilitated into market-rate residential units. She explained the request is consistent with the 2008 Dubuque Comprehensive Plan. She explained the plan meets the Housing, Land Use and Urban Design, and Economic Development Elements.

The Commission questioned whether the development is dependent on Historic Tax Credits and the likelihood of qualifying for them. Staff Member Carstens explained that is not a determination made by City staff; however, based on this property's as well as other church properties architectural significance and associations with the City of Dubuque, a strong argument could be made for listing on the National Register and tax credits. The Commission noted the establishment of the urban revitalization area and rehabilitation of the Holy Ghost buildings are great examples of the investment that the Central Avenue corridor will benefit from. Staff Member Johnson noted the Urban Revitalization areas are a significant financial incentive, and noted they abate tax increases that usually accompany property improvements. Staff Member Carstens noted the possibility of designating the structures as individually historic properties, which would also provide additional incentives.

The Commission discussed parking requirements.

Motion by Van Iten, seconded by Darter, to recommend approval of the Paragon Square Urban Revitalization Area Plan as presented. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye: Vincent, Prochaska, Van Iten, Darter and Winterwood; Nay – None.

ACTION ITEMS

Smart Planning Consortium: Staff Member Carstens updated the Commission on the Smart Planning Consortium meetings as well as the public participation training. She

reviewed the training session, noting the presenter's recommendation that public participation efforts need to be 50% on-line and 50% off-line in order to reach the greatest number of people. She noted the Commission is asked to review and comment on the draft of the Community Facilities chapter of the Regional Plan.

The Commission discussed the Community Facilities chapter of the Regional Plan. The Commission recommended an additional objective under Health Care Goal #2 to encourage infrastructure that promotes wellness and reduces obesity. The Commission discussed the importance of involving health care providers in health care issues facing the community. The Commission recommended that Health Care Goal #1 be amended to read, "The Dubuque County Board of Health will work with healthcare providers to achieve the goals included in the County Health Needs Assessment and Health Improvement Plan."

The Commission recommended Objective #1 under Health Care Goal #4 be amended to read, "Develop programs to improve and monitor air and water quality."

The Commission suggested Education be an element in the Regional Plan. The Commission noted the critical role quality education plays in attracting and retaining professionals and businesses in the community. The Commission noted a goal of the Educational Element could be: "To involve the full spectrum of educational institutions, private and non-profit, in meeting the educational needs of K-12 students through senior citizens." The Commission suggested an objective to reach out to the educational community for their input and their participation in community planning efforts. The Commission discussed another Education objective: "To get all sectors of the educational community, public and private, working together to identify and meet current educational needs."

The Commission discussed joint facilities planning efforts with the City and Dubuque Community School District, noting opportunities for shared recreational facilities. The Commission and staff noted the regional plan does not have a Recreation element. The Commission suggested considering a recreation element and a goal: "To form partnerships for joint ventures with school districts, cities, non-profits and colleges to develop recreational facilities and programs."

Update of Dubuque's 2008 Comprehensive Plan: Staff Member Carstens explained Planning Services staff is gearing up for the next update of the City's 2008 Comprehensive Plan. She explained that with 2010 Census data being released and the Dubuque Regional Smart Planning Project underway, this is an ideal time to begin. She also noted the 2010 I-Jobs funding for the Lower Bee Branch Creek Restoration Project requires the City to review and amend its Comprehensive Plan utilizing Iowa's Smart Planning Principles. Staff Member Carstens reviewed the goals and objectives of the 2008 Dubuque Comprehensive Plan against the elements found in the Iowa Smart Planning Law.

Staff Member Carstens noted gaps in the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan, such as Hazard Element, Intergovernmental Collaboration Element, and Public Participation Plan. The Commission noted the City is in a good position because many of the Smart Planning Principles are already addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission noted the

Hazard Element, Intergovernmental Element, and Community Character Element may need to be considered in the plan. The Commission discussed development of a strong policy statement which outlines the community's approach to the plan. Staff Member Carstens noted the Hazard Element is the only element mandated by the state to be added. The Commission discussed the best approach to accomplish this, whether adding a new element or referencing the existing Hazard Mitigation Plan in the Public Safety Element of the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan.

The Commission discussed the best approach incorporate the Smart Planning Principles into Dubuque's planning efforts. The Commission discussed an approach that would blend the Smart Planning Principles into the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan and an approach that would use the Smart Planning Principles as the model for the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan.

The Commission discussed Smart Planning Principles that may not need to be in the plan. The Commission discussed the public participation element and questioned its relevancy. The Commission noted some of these issues can be addressed as an overview document or section of the plan that discusses how the City of Dubuque, its citizens and leadership approaches the development of a flexible open-ended Comprehensive Plan that takes into account a number of considerations that are dynamic in their character and brings the Comprehensive Plan into compliance with the relevant Smart Planning Principles. Commission Van Iten suggested an introduction that describes the City's history, characteristics and direction.

The Commission and staff discussed Smart Planning Principles that should be considered in the update of the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan. The Commission agreed the Hazard Mitigation element needs to be included in the new plan. The Commission again discussed the approach to blending the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan with the Smart Planning Principles. The Commission requested staff's opinion. Staff Member Carstens explained blending the documents would be a good approach, and noted the Comprehensive Plan may be stronger in a number of elements. Staff Member Johnson suggested blending the Smart Planning Principles into the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan because there is 20 years of public input invested in this document. He noted in the end, the Comprehensive Plan is a City of Dubuque document and it should reflect this. The Commission agreed and noted the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan already has much of the Smart Planning Principles. The Commission discussed the format of the plan, noting an overly specific document would not be beneficial. The Commission requested the Planning Services Department conduct a more in-depth analysis, and develop suggestions based on the Commission's discussion. Staff Member Carstens noted it may be a couple of months before the information can be put together.

LIAISON/SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Enterprise Zone Commission: Commission Van Iten reviewed the project at 1132 & 1136 Locust Street as well as Flexsteel's move into port of Dubuque. He noted there are \$12 million in funds involved in the Flexsteel project and a potential 15 new jobs.

ITEMS FROM PUBLIC: None.

ITEMS FROM COMMISSION:

Presentation on Upper Catfish Creek Watershed Planning: Eric Schmechel, Local Project Coordinator with the Dubuque Soil and Water Conservation District, presented the Upper Catfish Creek Watershed Plan. Mr. Schmechel reviewed watershed management principles, noting the upper Catfish Creek Watershed Project, hydrology, site design concepts, urban conservation, and the Dubuque County Erosion Sediment Control Ordinance. He presented the issues and best management practices for the Upper Catfish Creek Watershed Project. He noted the professional standards and implementation of the Dubuque County Erosion Sediment Control Ordinance. He reviewed hydrology issues and hydrologic conditions in Iowa. He noted the importance of improving not only water quality but also reducing the volume of water runoff. He noted the volume of water is part of water quality.

Mr. Schmechel reviewed conservation designed subdivisions and Best Management Practices for site development. He discussed the importance of incorporating urban conservation into communities and noted the City of Dubuque and Dubuque County Urban Conservation Program.

The Commission questioned how budget cuts may impact water quality issues. Mr. Schmechel reviewed state and federal funding, and noted it will have a significant impact on the ability to fund water quality programs and improvements.

ITEMS FROM STAFF: None.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laura Carstens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" and last name "Carstens" clearly distinguishable.

Laura Carstens, Planning Services Manager

Adopted—May 18, 2011