



Approved

**MINUTES**  
**CITY OF DUBUQUE LONG RANGE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR SESSION**

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 21, 2011  
City Council Chamber, Historic Federal Building

**Commissioners Present:** Chairperson Jim Prochaska; Commissioners Alan Vincent, Richard Van Iten, John Pregler, and Charles Winterwood.

**Commissioners Excused:** Commissioner Chad Darter.

**Staff Members Present:** Laura Carstens, David Johnson and Cori Burbach.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Prochaska at 5:30 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 August 17, 2011, as submitted. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye- Vincent, Prochaska, Van Iten, Pregler and Winterwood; Nay – None.

**ITEMS FROM STAFF:**

Presentation on Sustainable Dubuque: Sustainability Coordinator Cori Burbach presented the Sustainable Dubuque Plan. She explained she has been working with the Planning Services Department on the format of the Comprehensive Plan. She reviewed how Sustainable Dubuque began as well as the public input that went into developing the plan. She explained the Sustainable Dubuque Task Force and their role. She noted sustainability has been a top City Council priority for a number of years. She stated the Sustainable Dubuque Task Force has promoted sustainability initiatives and helped sustainability take root within the community. She explained the Task Force has collected feedback to make the Sustainability vision representative of the community. She stated that vision was developed into a vision statement and the three pillars of sustainability. She explained Sustainable Dubuque is the framework for which many public documents and initiatives are based.

Staff Member Burbach reviewed the Sustainability Principles. She explained some of the sustainability initiatives, noting the Petal Project, Project Hope and Green Vision Education. She noted Sustainable Dubuque is the brand for the city. She reviewed the University of Iowa Partnership. She described the University of Iowa's involvement in the Green and

Healthy Homes Project, poverty analysis, Sustainable Dubuque Performance Metrix Project, Sustainable Mapping Project, and the Healthy Foods Project.

The Commission thanked Staff Member Burbach for attending the meeting and the thorough presentation. Commissioner Pregler suggested the Sustainable Dubuque Plan address infrastructure in greater detail. He questioned the potential negative impacts of Sustainability in the future and noted the water meter project as an example. He explained the new water meters alone do not make the water system more sustainable; rather, we need sustainable infrastructure to increase efficiency and offset potential loss. He noted an unexpected consequence is that variable use fees may go down so much that price increases may be needed for fixed fees. He reviewed the many sustainable and financial benefits of infrastructure investment. He questioned what is being done when sustainability affects revenue investment.

Staff Member Burbach discussed the Green and Healthy Homes Initiatives as an example. She noted the initiative can make homes more efficient but has the potential to increase staff demands and needs. She explained that the resulting increase in technology and efficiencies in the programs will lessen the need for staff over time.

Commissioner Van Iten noted that Dubuque is a community that values education but education is an issue that is consistently missing from many public discussions and documents, including the Sustainable Dubuque Plan. Staff Member Burbach noted education is a large component of the Sustainable Dubuque Initiative, and explained she has worked with staff within the Dubuque Community School District as well as Dubuque colleges in developing partnerships and input. She also noted much of the business community was consulted in developing the Sustainable Dubuque Plan.

Commissioner Van Iten noted a need for a universal communication system throughout the community. He explained outreach and engagement methods need to be developed that affords the entire community an opportunity to participate in public discussions regardless of their access and ability to use technology. He stated he believes the Sustainable Dubuque Plan needs to address communication. Staff Member Burbach agreed and noted that even those with access to computers may not be able to effectively navigate websites and documents. The Commission noted that community education needs to be a continuous outreach effort. The Commission stated that education is also a responsibility of the entire community. Commissioner Van Iten noted that education is undervalued and misunderstood within the Dubuque Community. He stated public documents need to reinforce the values and benefits of education, and City Council needs to more strongly support education and promote involvement within the community.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

Smart Planning Consortium: Staff Member Carstens updated the Commission on the Smart Planning Consortium efforts. She reviewed the Land Use Goals and Objectives as well as the Community Population Projections. She noted that the Smart Planning

Consortium has reviewed and approved the Land Use Goals and Objectives. She explained that as part of the Community Data chapter, population projections were developed. She noted those projections are for Dubuque County and the seven communities in the Smart Planning Consortium. She noted the Commission should review and comment on the Land Use Goals and Objectives as well as the Community Population Projections.

The Commission discussed the population projections. The Commission expressed concern that the projections are far too optimistic and could consequently contribute to urban sprawl issues. The Commission noted the employment forecasting also seems to be overly optimistic.

The Commission questioned whether any organizations currently work with developers regarding neighborhood concepts. Staff Member Carstens noted the City of Dubuque regularly works with the Developers Roundtable, but there are no such organizations that work with developers on a regional basis.

The Commission discussed the benefits of clarifying what is meant by “neighborhood”, in terms of its design, function, and sense of place. The Commission questioned whether there would be a benefit to defining neighborhood in the Regional Smart Plan and City of Dubuque Comprehensive Plan. The Commission noted it is an inviting but elusive concept to work with in planning. Planning Services staff stated that attempting to define “neighborhood” would be difficult and perhaps best if not done. Staff noted the numerous economic, social, cultural and geographic variables that go into the make-up of a neighborhood. Staff explained the concept of a neighborhood is different for many people, regardless of where you live.

Update of Dubuque’s 2008 Comprehensive Plan: Staff Member Johnson explained the Commission has been discussing the format for the next Comprehensive Plan update. He noted the City Manager had recommended an approach that would use the Sustainable Dubuque Plan as the outline for the Comprehensive Plan update. He noted the Sustainable Dubuque format would replace the three environments of the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan with the three pillars of sustainability of the Sustainable Dubuque Plan. He explained the 14 elements of the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan would be replaced with Dubuque’s 11 Sustainability Principles. He noted the City Manager’s interest in infusing the goals and objectives of the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan as well as the 10 Smart Planning Principles into the Sustainable Dubuque format. Staff Member Johnson explained the recommendation was brought to the Commission at their August meeting. He noted that the Commission had expressed concerns that important goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan could not be incorporated into a plan based on Dubuque’s Sustainability Plan and 11 Sustainability Principles. He stated the Commission was concerned that too many important elements, goals and objectives of the current Comprehensive Plan would be omitted because it could not correlate to one of the Dubuque Sustainability Principles. He explained the Commission directed Planning

Services staff to investigate the ability to build the Comprehensive Plan Update around the three pillars of sustainability and 11 Sustainability Principles of the Sustainable Dubuque Plan.

Staff Member Johnson explained he performed a three-part analysis of the City Manager's recommendation to incorporate the City of Dubuque Comprehensive plan into the Sustainable Dubuque format. He noted the first analysis is a Concept Plan analysis which depicts what the City of Dubuque Comprehensive Plan update would look like in a Sustainable Dubuque format. He explained goals of the Comprehensive Plan were not taken into consideration in an effort to maximize the number of objectives of the Comprehensive Plan that could possibly relate to a sustainability principle. He noted the exercise gives the Commission a sense of how the plan would come together and how well the Comprehensive Plan goals can work together with the Sustainability Principles.

He noted the second analysis was the Comprehensive Plan analysis. He noted that staff again reviewed every objective of the Comprehensive Plan and highlighted those objectives that could be included and those that would have to be omitted. He noted this analysis was intended to clearly depict which specific objectives of the Comprehensive Plan can be incorporated and those that could not.

The third analysis was the Iowa Smart Planning legislation analysis. Staff Member Johnson explained this analysis was developed to show which Iowa Smart Planning principles can be incorporated into the Sustainability Plan format, and those that would need to be omitted.

Staff Member Johnson explained that some issues immediately became apparent when undertaking the analysis. He stated the Sustainable Dubuque Plan was never anticipated to be a Comprehensive Plan for the community. He noted both documents are community documents; however, a community's comprehensive plan is designed to address a broad scope of issues, whereas the Sustainable Dubuque Plan was developed to address more specific issues. He noted when undertaking the analysis, it seemed the effort to infuse Comprehensive Plan objectives, regardless of how liberally the objectives were interpreted, into the Sustainable Dubuque Plan format detracted from the intent and effectiveness of both documents. Staff Member Johnson also explained that many of the Sustainability Principles have few, if any, correlating objectives from the Comprehensive Plan. He noted the Healthy Local Food Sustainability Principle does not have any existing goals of the Comprehensive Plan that related. The Commission discussed that there would be an opportunity to expand on these concepts into the Comprehensive Plan update; however, some Sustainability Principles would be too narrow in scope to warrant consideration as a separate element of a community comprehensive plan.

Staff Member Johnson explained another challenge was numerous objectives cannot be incorporated into the Dubuque Sustainability Plan format. He explained there were many goals from the Public Safety, Infrastructure, City Fiscal, Health, and Human Services

Elements that would be omitted. He noted many of these objectives are important issues identified by the community and that needs to be a consideration. He explained the Efficiency, Transparency, and the Consistency Smart Planning Principles cannot be incorporated into the Dubuque Sustainability Plan format either. He noted the importance of sustainability to the community of Dubuque as it is the framework for many of the City initiatives.

Staff Member Johnson explained that given the challenges, Planning Services Staff has prepared a concept for the 2008 City of Dubuque Comprehensive Plan Update that shows relevant Sustainability Principles after each objective. He noted an approach similar to this could be considered and it would stress the importance of sustainability within the community without developing a new format that would omit many goals the community has already identified as important. He explained the proposed concept is being presented to the Commission for their consideration. He noted the Commission is being asked to review the analysis and make a recommendation to the City Manager on the Commission's suggested outline for the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan update.

The Commission discussed the analysis. Commissioner Van Iten discussed the importance of involving the medical community and medical practitioners and professionals in the Dubuque Comprehensive Planning process. Staff Member Carstens reviewed the previous involvement of the health care community in the planning process as reflected in the current Comprehensive Plan. The Commission explained that the three environments of the current Dubuque Comprehensive Plan could be replaced with the three pillars of sustainability of the Sustainable Dubuque Plan; however, it does not appear that the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan can be incorporated into the 11 Sustainability Principles without compromising too many important issues as well as the effectiveness of the document.

The Commission discussed the broader context of the Comprehensive Plan versus the narrower context of the Sustainable Dubuque Plan, and how the two could potentially work together. Staff Member Carstens noted in the future, changes to the Sustainable Dubuque Plan may be justified in order to incorporate some of the public safety and infrastructure issues that appear in the Comprehensive Plan but not in the Sustainable Dubuque Plan. The Commission noted the 11 Sustainability Principles were not designed to be a comprehensive plan. Rather, they were designed to make the city more sustainable. The Commission noted they were not surprised to see that the goals of the community could not be incorporated into the Sustainable Dubuque model. Staff Member Carstens noted the Sustainable Dubuque Plan is a strategic plan and the Comprehensive Plan is not designed to be a strategic plan.

The Commission noted regardless of the format, one beneficial outcome of the analysis is a number of sustainability principles and concepts were identified that could be included in the Comprehensive Plan; however, it would be much more appropriate to incorporate those concepts into the community's Comprehensive Plan. Staff Member Carstens noted issues

in the Sustainability Plan, such as Smart Water, Smart Energy and Healthy Local Foods, can be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Motion by Pregler, seconded by Winterwood, to recommend keeping the Sustainable Dubuque Plan and City of Dubuque Comprehensive Plan separate while drawing relationships between the two documents showing where there's consistency, and keep the Comprehensive Plan in its current format and use Sustainability Principle icons at the end of each goal and objective that applies.

The Commission discussed the motion. Commissioner Van Iten supported the motion, noting that the Dubuque community is very close, if not already at the point of overworking the concept of sustainability in its public speech. He noted everything is discussed within the framework of sustainability and before long, sustainability will become a very vacuous concept that people will become tired of hearing. He noted the concept of sustainability is very important and needs to be kept intact as best as the City can by showing those connections between the two documents. He noted an approach where sustainability principle icons are provided at the end of each goal and objective for which it relates to would be an effective way of showing a correlation between the two documents while also not omitting or constraining other important issues within the community by having it within a sustainability framework.

Motion carried by the following vote: Aye- Vincent, Prochaska, Van Iten, Pregler and Winterwood; Nay – None.

**LIAISON/SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

Enterprise Zone Commission: No report.

**ITEMS FROM PUBLIC:** None.

**ITEMS FROM COMMISSION:**

Commissioner Vacancy: Chairperson Prochaska noted that Dubuque Community School Board Member Craig Beytien was in the audience observing the meeting. Staff Member Carstens noted Mr. Beytien applied to serve on the Long Range Planning Advisory Commission and she recommended he attend a meeting prior to his application going to City Council in order to gain an understanding of the Commission and its duties.

Bee Branch: Commissioner Winterwood noted he attended the City work session on the Phase 2 of the Bee Branch Project, which goes from Garfield to 24<sup>th</sup> Street. He noted he was very impressed by all of the public amenities proposed in the plan. He noted the Heritage Trail will be a waterfall feature where the storm sewer daylights into the Bee Branch Creek. He reviewed other public amenities and sustainable best management practices that will be used in the project.

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The Commission discussed the positive impacts the project will have on property values and liability in the area. The Commission expressed concern that once the Bee Branch project is complete, the improvements will encourage new development that will change the character and socioeconomic values in the area.

Bicycle Friendly Status: Commissioner Winterwood noted that Staff Member Carstens applied for bicycle friendly status for the City of Dubuque. He noted that the City was not awarded the recognition; however, Dubuque was given honorable mention.

The Commission noted the new hike/bike trail signs are greatly improved from the previous signs, noting they are much more visible.

Telegraph Herald Publication: Chairperson Prochaska noted that the Telegraph Herald appeared to not include the agenda for the meeting in the public meetings section. Staff Member Carstens noted agendas for each meeting are mailed one week in advance to the media, including the Telegraph Herald. She stated she does not know why the Telegraph Herald does not include the Commission's agendas. The Commission noted it will be an important issue once the Comprehensive Plan update process and engagement begins. Staff Member Carstens noted she has requested funding in the Planning Services Department budget to facilitate public engagement.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Laura Carstens, Planning Services Manager

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Adopted—November 16, 2011