

MINUTES
CITY OF DUBUQUE LONG RANGE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 19, 2012
City Council Chamber, Historic Federal Building

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

Commissioners Excused: None.

Staff Members Present: Laura Carstens, David Heiar and David Johnson.

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 Iowa Open Meetings Law.

MINUTES: Motion by Winterwood, seconded by Pregler, to approve the minutes of August 15, 2012, as submitted. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Vincent, Prochaska, Beytien, Van Iten, Pregler, Darter and Winterwood; Nay – None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Dubuque County Regional Smart Plan Chapters: Dan Fox, Transportation Planner with East Central Intergovernmental Association, and Anna O'Shea, Dubuque County Zoning Administrator, provided the update to the Dubuque County Regional Smart Plan on Agricultural and Natural Resources, Issues and Opportunities, Intergovernmental Collaboration, and Community Character chapters.

Chairperson Prochaska opened the public meeting. Mr. Fox explained the intent of the Dubuque County Regional Smart Plan. He reviewed the Consortium membership. Mr. Fox noted the plan is scheduled to be completed in November 2012. He provided a review of the chapters that have been completed.

Agriculture and Natural Resources: Mr. Fox reviewed the Agriculture and Natural Resources chapter. He explained the Dubuque Region is located in the Driftless area, which is attributed to the region's rugged topography, but also unique natural environment. He noted the topography presents challenges for agriculture in the region. He reviewed water quality, air quality, land development and soil erosion issues and regulation concerns. He noted much of Dubuque County has a poor corn soil suitability rating due to the area's topography; however, a number of agricultural

opportunities can be implemented in such locations. He reviewed the chapter's recommendations to address the agricultural and natural resource issues.

Issues and Opportunities: Mr. Fox next reviewed the Issues and Opportunities chapter of the Dubuque County Smart Plan. He explained this chapter provides an overview of all the chapters and gives the reader a good understanding of the top issues of each chapter. He reviewed the Smart Planning opportunities, noting that stakeholders and public input identified cooperation rather than competition as one of the greatest outcomes for communities from the Dubuque County Regional Smart Plan. He noted the chapter promotes best management practices. Using transportation as an example, Mr. Fox noted increasing traffic congestion, safety concerns, road and bridge maintenance and funding as issues. He explained transportation opportunities include encouraging alternative modes of transportation, maximizing transportation investment, complete streets and mixed use development.

Intergovernmental Collaboration: Mr. Fox reviewed the Intergovernmental Collaboration chapter. He reviewed the benefits of increased collaboration, noting cost savings, greater effectiveness of addressing regional issues, the ability to identify issues earlier, reduced litigation and improved consistency and predictability of governmental regulation. He explained all these factors ultimately improve the service to citizens. Mr. Fox reviewed how governments collaborate as well as the recommendations for the chapter.

Community Character: Mr. Fox next reviewed the Community Character chapter. He explained this chapter focuses on things that make each community a great place to live. He reviewed the characteristics of each community. He explained much of the input from public input sessions helped provide information for this chapter. He reviewed many of the things that help define Dubuque's community character as well as recommendations to preserve and enhance that character.

Mr. Fox welcomed questions and comments from the Commission and public. No public was present and the public hearing was closed.

The Commission discussed the chapters and suggested an inventory of natural lands and viewpoints along Great River Road be included in the Agriculture and Natural Resources chapter. The Commission suggested clarification and verification of the population statistics in the Community Character Chapter. Mr. Fox noted the Community Character Chapter is a work in progress. Mr. Fox and the Commission recognized that the decades for the corresponding population statistics are incorrect and need to be switched.

Chairperson Prochaska questioned air quality in Dubuque. He noted the air quality monitoring station is in Potosi, Wisconsin. He questioned whether an air station in Wisconsin is a fair indicator of air quality in Dubuque, and whether the EPA would ever

place a station in the Dubuque region. Staff Member Carstens explained a Task Force has already looked into the issue. She noted a study which indicated Dubuque's air quality is determined in large part by the surrounding area because we are located in the Mississippi River Valley. She explained Potosi does monitor air which Dubuque eventually gets. She noted when air quality in other cities down river improves, so does the air quality in Dubuque. Commissioners Winterwood and Prochaska requested copies of the study. The Commission further discussed air quality issues.

Commissioner Van Iten raised concerns regarding water quality as related to the Agriculture and Natural Resources chapter of the plan. He expressed surprise that there is no county-wide private well water quality monitoring system in place. He noted it is especially surprising given a number of private residential wells are located in close proximity to agricultural facilities. He questioned whether County Health should take more of an interest in water quality, especially given the regions recent flood situations. Commissioner Prochaska noted that the cities regularly test water. Anna O'Shea explained the County does test water for both bacteria and nitrates. She explained as a result, oftentimes the County requires chlorine additives or deeper wells. She stated she was unsure whether the County Health Department maintains a database. She explained septic systems are inspected as well, even before the sale of a home. The Commission recommended the Dubuque County Regional Smart Plan have a major component on systematic comprehensive water quality and well testing programs.

The Commission commended the efforts of both staff and the Smart Planning Consortium in developing the Dubuque County Regional Smart Plan.

ACTION ITEMS

Greater Downtown Urban Renewal Plan Amendment: Economic Development Director David Heiar presented the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal Plan Amendment. He explained the amendment will expand the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District to include the North Kerper Boulevard and Quebecor subareas. He referenced Attachment A in the packet of information provided to the Commission. He clarified the Quebecor subarea merges the Quebecor Economic Development District into the Downtown District. Mr. Heiar reviewed the financial tools which exist to assist businesses with expansion in economic development areas. He reviewed the Rousselot development on Kerper Boulevard which precipitated the requested amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan. He explained the difference between a core urban renewal district and a stand-alone economic development district. He noted stand-alone districts can use any new tax increment only within the boundary. He explained by merging with the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District, businesses and economic development efforts can use increment from the entire district.

The Commission asked whether all businesses along Kerper Boulevard were notified. Staff Member Heiar stated they are not individually notified, and explained there is no impact to businesses or the taxes that they pay. Urban renewal districts merely impact

how taxes are allocated as well as making those properties also eligible for financial incentives associated with the district. The Commission asked whether TIF is part of the financial tools considered both before and after a development. Staff Member Heiar explained TIF is only available after the urban renewal district is created. The Commission asked whether TIF is the primary benefit to being located in the urban renewal district. Staff Member Heiar confirmed that TIF is the primary benefit and clarified TIF can be used for both economically depressed areas as well as economic development efforts. He explained the economic development districts encourage business expansion and growth. Commissioner Beytien recognized the economic development impacts from tax increment financing, but noted TIF also has a negative effect on school district revenue. Staff Member Heiar noted city schools are reimbursed from the state for the tax levy to help offset the loss of tax revenue. He noted that 10-20 jobs will result from the Rousselot development.

The Commission questioned the impact on City revenue as a result of creating and expanding the urban renewal district. Staff Member Heiar noted in the case of the Rousselot development, much of the investment is in equipment, which is not taxed, and therefore, will have little impact on revenue.

The Commission questioned whether there are a lot of vacancies along Kerper Boulevard, and in the Schmitt Island area. Staff Member Heiar noted there are a few vacant buildings, including Thermolyne which is included in the proposed expanded area, which may help. The Commission noted Bowling and Beyond is also under consideration.

Motion by Prochaska, seconded by Van Iten, to recommend approval of the Amended and Restated Urban Renewal Plan for the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District as it is consistent with the 2008 Dubuque Comprehensive Plan. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Vincent, Prochaska, Van Iten, Pregler, Darter and Winterwood; Nay – Beytien; Abstain – None.

Smart Planning Consortium Update: Staff Member Carstens reviewed the status and schedule of the Smart Planning Consortium Update. She noted the future land use map and implementation will be discussed at the October 10, 2012 public input meeting.

LIAISON/SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Enterprise Zone Commission: There was no report.

ITEMS FROM STAFF:

Revised Outline for Comprehensive Plan Update: Staff Member Carstens reviewed the outline for the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan Update. She explained the City Manager would like the Commission to consider deleting references to the emotional and spiritual environments from the Smart Planning outline as well as expand the list of

referenced community planning documents beyond the initial examples identified. Staff Member Carstens noted new additions are shown in red italics. She explained additions based on the Iowa Smart Planning Code are shown in red bold italics with an asterisk. She explained the reference to the emotional and spiritual environments are in the Dubuque City Code definition of the Comprehensive Plan. She explained in the past, the Commission and City Council have attempted to weave these aspects of community life into the plan. She explained it is difficult to address these aspects of community in a comprehensive plan.

The Commission asked whether emotional and spiritual environments are requirements of the Smart Planning legislation. Staff Member Carstens confirmed they are not, and noted the only requirement from the Smart Planning legislation is incorporating hazard mitigation into community plans. She explained the City of Dubuque has largely accomplished this by adopting the Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan which will be referenced in the document. She reviewed the Vision Downtown process and results.

The Commission recommended referencing the efforts of the Smart Planning Consortium as well as the Dubuque County Regional Smart Plan in the introduction and overview section. The Commission clarified the efforts should only be a reference rather than a separate section and the reference would best be made in the background section. The Commission further discussed recommended changes and found them to be sensible and reflective of a contemporary comprehensive plan.

By consensus, the Commission agreed on the outline as discussed and recommended it be forwarded back to the City Manager for transmittal to the City Council for their review and approval.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Laura Carstens, Planning Services Manager

1-16-13

Adopted