

MINUTES
CITY OF DUBUQUE LONG RANGE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 17, 2013

City Council Chamber, Historic Federal Building

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

Commissioners Excused: Commissioners Chad Darter and Craig Beytien.

Staff Members Present: Laura Carstens, David Johnson and Nikola Pavelic.

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 Winterwood, to approve the minutes of March 20, 2013 as submitted. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Vincent, Prochaska, Van Iten, Pregler and Winterwood; Nay – None.

ACTION ITEMS

Community Engagement Presentation: Staff Member Carstens introduced the community engagement process and Community Engagement Coordinator Nikola Pavelic. She explained the Comprehensive Plan is one of many pilot projects Staff Member Pavelic is working on.

Staff Member Pavelic reviewed the purpose of community engagement. He reviewed his role is to help identify and remove barriers to meaningful, relevant, and accessible engagement between the City of Dubuque and its residents. He explained it is critical to understand problems the people involved and systems, processes and tools to overcome barriers. He reviewed steps for removing barriers, including evaluating, coordinating and planning. He discussed developing relationships with people and sharing ideas as the tools to help remove barriers. He discussed key projects he is involved in, noting the Volunteer Center, Resident Input and Public Decisions Project with the Aquatic Center, City Life, and the Comprehensive Plan update.

Staff Member Pavelic discussed the requirements for a meaningful and diverse Comprehensive Plan. He reviewed the shared vision for the project as well as the channels for engagement. Staff Member Carstens reviewed the draft Community

Engagement Process for the Comprehensive Plan update. She reviewed the vision for the community engagement process, noting the goals and intent of the process. She explained the three pillars of sustainability will be the framework for engagement. She reviewed different ways to engage people, noting on-line and personal opportunities, such as community meetings. She explained the need for improved community engagement in the Comprehensive Plan process, noting the shortcomings of traditional public hearings. She explained a public meeting or workshop setting where people feel like they're being heard and validated will be an important component to this update. She explained following the community workshops, a logical next step would be a work session with City Council with the last step being the formal legally-required meetings.

Staff Member Carstens reviewed ways to increase the capacity of City of Dubuque staff and Commissions to assist in the engagement. The Commission discussed peoples' perception of the inability to affect change in government. They discussed best approaches to get the message across to residents. The Commission noted challenges and the need to avoid engagement settings where only narrow and personal agendas dominate discussion. Staff Member Johnson noted the revised format to utilize community workshop settings will help eliminate some of that concern.

The Commission expressed support for the on-line approach to engagement, but also stressed the importance of personal engagement and utilizing City Expo. The Commission supported using the three pillars of sustainability as the framework for engagement as well as the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff and the Commission discussed the Commission having a more involved role in engagement, perhaps being represented at City events such as City Expo as well as help facilitate workshops. Chairperson Prochaska discussed the need for front-end education to explain why the comprehensive plan is important and how it is used. The Commission suggested preparing an educational video to be aired on City Channel 8. The Commission and staff again reiterated the importance of marketing and front-end education in order to inform residents and instill a sense of importance for the document and process.

Commission Van Iten stated he was at the Sustainable Indicator presentation for the Dubuque County Smart Plan. He noted how widely split residents of Dubuque County were on the concept of planning. He noted the divide amongst residents on the perception of community planning and its role in government. He noted some people felt it was a beneficial purpose, while others felt it was an attempt to take over operation or ownership of private property. He noted discussion was heated on both sides. He explained people expressed different expectations of government. Some peoples' perception of government was positive, while others were negative, but they were always tied to self-interest. He explained it is critical to know what people expect of government, and it is critical for government to know more about its constituents.

The Commission stated information learned about the community needs to be put to work in the engagement process. The Commission stated the plan has to reflect awareness of individual and shared interest in government. The Commission noted engagement challenges under discussion are not unique to Dubuque.

The Commission recommended using City Expo as a marketing and educational opportunity. The Commission suggested the Multi-Family Cultural Center as a good location for downtown engagement. Staff Member Carstens noted the need to engage City Departments as well. She stated it is important to engage staff on the front lines in the Comprehensive Plan Update and department managers. She stated staff on the front lines has first-hand experience and knowledge, and we do not always hear from them.

Commission Pregler questioned how do departments use the Comprehensive Plan for capital improvement projects. He questioned whether the City develops and designs projects in response to the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, or do they develop and design projects and then relate goals and objectives after the fact. Staff Member Carstens stated it is an important question and staff and the Commission should work with department managers to see how the Comprehensive Plan works for them and how it might work better.

Commissioner Van Iten questioned how much effort is put into monitoring departments in terms of developing projects relevant to the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff Member Carstens explained other than through the budget process, there is no annual audit or evaluation of projects. Staff Member Pavelic stated from a departmental capacity perspective, departments also have to know what's in it for them. The Commission suggested the Comprehensive Plan should serve as a guide for departments in developing projects. The Commission again discussed auditing projects, and whether there was any value to information to be learned from that.

The Commission discussed additional channels for engagement, noting local newspapers and publications, such as Dubuque 365, as sources to educate and raise awareness on the Comprehensive Plan Update. The Commission and staff discussed submitting editorials to the Telegraph Herald. Chairperson Prochaska stated he would be agreeable to submitting an editorial on behalf of the Commission.

The Commission noted they need to be more visible in the Comprehensive Plan Update process and rethink how they interact with residents participating in the input opportunities. Staff Member Pavelic noted the next step is to develop a plan for engagement. He stated resources will be outlined as well as possible roles for the Commission. He discussed how engagement affects how people go about their business and work. The Commission stated it is critical to communicate how the Comprehensive Plan affects people in their everyday life.

The Commission discussed key performance indicators and questioned whether they have the ability to set standards based on Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives. The Commission again questioned whether there are audit mechanisms. Staff Member Carstens explained the challenges and limited value in auditing capital improvement projects. She noted alternative indicators such as City Council goals and priorities.

Staff Member Johnson noted the Comprehensive Plan is not just a City of Dubuque government document; rather, it is a community document. He stated it is a document that should be a reflection of the community, and a tool that businesses interested in Dubuque as well as residents, non-profit organizations, and citizens should be able to gauge a sense of our values and goals. He noted it is important for the community as a whole to participate, take ownership of the document, and help implement the goals and objectives that are developed.

The Commission stated the document needs to relate to residents. The Commission noted the additional sustainability principles incorporated into the framework for the document have the potential to make the document too overwhelming and water down its effect. The Commission stated it will be important to condense and streamline the document so it remains manageable for the average reader.

LIAISON/SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Enterprise Zone Commission: No report.

ITEMS FROM PUBLIC: None.

ITEMS FROM COMMISSION: None.

ITEMS FROM STAFF: None.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Carstens, Planning Services Manager

Adopted