

MINUTES OF A RESCHEDULED REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: November 16, 2006

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Urbana City Building
400 South Vine Street
Urbana, IL 61801

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ben Grosser, Lew Hopkins, Michael Pollock, Bernadine Stake, Marilyn Upah-Bant, James Ward

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Jane Burris, Don White

STAFF PRESENT: Gale Jamison, Assistant City Engineer; Elizabeth Tyler, Director of Community Development Services Department; Tom Carrino, Economic Development Manager; Robert Myers, Planning Manager; Teri Andel, Planning Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: Ralph Langenheim, Susan Taylor

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m., the roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Robert Myers, Planning Manager, commented that he would like to provide an update on the Comprehensive Plan amendment under the Staff Report agenda item. The Plan Commission agreed.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Stake moved to approve the minutes from the September 7, 2006 Plan Commission meeting as presented. Ms. Upah-Bant seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as presented by unanimous vote.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

The following written communications were distributed at the meeting:

- Unofficial Notes from the October 23, 2006 Committee of the Whole Meeting regarding the 2005 Comprehensive Plan Update;
- A copy of the corrected legal notice for the future Plan Case No. 2020-T-06, Planned Unit Text Amendment, to be reviewed at the November 30, 2006 Plan Commission meeting; and
- The Planning Commissioner's Journal – Fall 2006.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Report on East Urbana Sewer Interceptor Engineering Study

Mr. Myers presented this case to the Plan Commission. He began introducing the case by explaining that the Mayor has asked that the Plan Commission to review and provide feedback on the planning implications for the proposed East Urbana Sewer Interceptor Engineering Study.

Ms. Stake inquired about the treatment process. Mr. Myers replied that the solids are separated out and dried and typically sent to a landfill. Gale Jamison, Assistant City Engineer, continued by explaining that the dried solids are farm applied, and the liquid that results from the treatment is discharged into the Saline Branch which runs east of the City of Urbana.

Mr. Jamison continued by saying that very early plans from some years ago actually showed a wastewater treatment facility to be located east of Urbana. Because of the improvements that were made to the northeast plant and the added capacity that has been gained there, there is no longer a need to build another wastewater treatment facility. Doing so would be a lot more expensive than the current proposal. The Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District (UCSD) is only proposing a new lift-station to pump the sewage to where the capacity of treatment currently is.

Mr. Myers continued with a detailed explanation of the planning implications for constructing a new sewer interceptor in East Urbana. He showed a map of the drainage basin that would be served by the proposed East Urbana interceptor and indicated that although this was the basin which could be served, but building the interceptor would not automatically open the entire drainage basin as immediately available for development. He reviewed the engineering report in terms of official development policies, specifically the goals and objectives of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan anticipates the project and has several major goals and objectives which would be carried out by construction of the East Side Interceptor. He concluded his presentation by noting that this project would need to be approved by the City

Council and that the Mayor has requested input from the Plan Commission on the planning and development implications for the project.

Elizabeth Tyler, Director of Community Development Services, mentioned that the City and UCSD estimate that the project may take up to five years to complete and that this was an exercise of looking ahead. She noted that when reviewing where new development can currently be served by sewer, the City would be seeing much of the remaining developable land on Future Land Use Map 7 come on line with the anticipated Menard's development of more than 300 acres. So in terms of sewage collection the City has essentially reached our limit for sewer service.

She pointed out that Urbana has some significant limits to growth. Stone Creek Subdivision is building out and South Ridge and Stone Creek Commons are capturing the last service area limits in that watershed. There are some other growth constraints that make this direction particularly important. To the north, the airport has a lot of land holdings but little development interests. For other various reasons, the City is not seeing a lot of development activity north of Interstate 74 and west of Cunningham Avenue. There is some residential development north of Interstate 74 and east of Cunningham Avenue, but a lot of it is shown in the Comprehensive Plan as being "rural residential" so it will not be intensively development. West of the Urbana city limits is the City of Champaign. In years past, the City had looked to grow somewhat south and west, and now this area is University of Illinois' holdings. So the City of Urbana has very small directions in which we can grow, and it just so happens those directions have the sewer limit that we are facing.

There is one property, which is the Pennell holdings, on the east side of IL Route 130 that would not be able to develop because of the lack of sewers. Menards will essentially take up the remainder of the sewer capacity.

Mr. Myers again added that if the proposed sewer interceptor lines and pump station are built, it would be the first step in providing additional sewer capacity but would not automatically open the entire drainage basin for development. Developers are still going to have to build sewer lines over the years to connect with this new part of the sewage collection system.

Mr. Pollock questioned how far away from the proposed pump station would development be able to happen if the proposed sewer interceptor lines and pump station are built. Mr. Myers answered by saying that ultimately it could serve to just east of Cottonwood Road. Mr. Jamison added that the proposed project would be a lift station that would handle the existing Myra station capacity, the force main to get the sewage to the wastewater treatment plant, and only 400 feet of interceptor outside of the lift station. Any extension of the interceptors to the north, to the south and to the west would be development driven. So if a developer would come in there, then the interceptor would need to be expanded to serve that area, and the developer would pay for a portion of the cost of the expansion. The City would be building a basis to serve a large area, but developers would drive how that occurs within that area.

Mr. Grosser inquired if a developer wanted to build south of the Myra Ride Subdivision, would the developer have to pay to run a line all the way to the proposed new lift station. Mr. Jamison noted that there is a temporary lift station being proposed for this area. So, they would probably

build the temporary lift station, which would pump into the existing system and then develop the interceptors as more development occurred to the east and to the north. He stated that there is a larger map that is part of the report that shows all of the tentative interceptor routing. It is tentative because as development occurs, it might take a different route. Mr. Myers added that the color map including in the Commission packet was intended to be a guide for the more technical larger map.

Ms. Upah-Bant asked what would be the expected lifespan of the proposed new interceptor and pump station. Mr. Jamison responded by saying that it should serve in excess of 30 years.

Mr. Hopkins understood the predicted location of the new lift station has been slightly moved which actually gets it lower. The better survey information has allowed an estimate of what area could be served from the proposed new station. So instead of being roughly a fifth of a mile west of Cottonwood being served, the limits would be a fifth of a mile east of Cottonwood Road. Mr. Jamison said that this is correct. The proposed study was based on the latest and more accurate Champaign County topographical data. The old report was based on United States Geological Survey (USGS) contour maps which are more general and less accurate. The newest topographic data has allowed UCSD to more accurately show the serviceable area with the same depth lift station in a different and better location.

Mr. Hopkins mentioned that he pointed this out because it is one of the things that some people are seeing in the proposed study that is different from the line shown in the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Maps. The change results in a technical difference in calculation and not from a difference in the proposed size of the lift station or general design or strategy for expanding the sewer service. The 1973 Comprehensive Plan actually shows a treatment plant in this area. UCSD and the City of Urbana have been planning to provide sewer service in this area for a long time. Mr. Myers commented that there may be a need for another sewage treatment plant some year but this is too far beyond our current plans. Mr. Hopkins stated that he meant the general pattern of intended extension of sewers has been following a strategy for at least 35 years. The technology changes a little bit but basic strategies have held.

Mr. Grosser inquired if the current sewer is at capacity, would the Pomology tract need to run line to the new pump station and interceptor if they decided to expand. Mr. Jamison explained that the Pomology Tract drains to the west down to the lift station on Race Street and gets sent to the west sewage treatment plant. Mr. Grosser questioned whether this negatively impacted the fact that the sewers in this area are basically to capacity. Mr. Jamison said no, it does not.

Ms. Stake read from the staff report that the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) signed off regarding endangered species and wetlands, and a copy of the DNR's report would be obtained. The staff report also states that an archeological survey of the area would be performed as part of the project, as well as the Illinois Historic Preservation Association and Army Corps of Engineers would sign off. When will all of this be performed and reports made available for the Plan Commission's review? Mr. Myers replied that if you use Federal money or a Federal permit, or Federal money passed through the State, there are safeguards to make sure that archaeological, historical, and environmental resources are not going to be impacted. These surveys, studies and reports need to be done before construction can take place. Mr.

Jamison added that these surveys, studies and reports were also part of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency permitting process for these types of facilities.

Mr. Pollock questioned what type of recommendation is the Mayor and City Council looking for. Mr. Myers stated that the Plan Commission is to provide feedback on the proposed study in terms of the planning implications for the proposed East Urbana sewer interceptor. Mr. Pollock commented that he took a look at some of the technical information and feels that it is way beyond his capacity. He commented that City staff is saying that we need to do this in order to continue growth and development, then it makes common sense to him that this is something the City needs to embark on. Ms. Tyler stated that a motion would be very helpful pertaining to the planning implications and the conformance to the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Grosser moved that the Plan Commission send the report to the City Council with a recommendation that they adopt it. Ms. Upah-Bant seconded the motion.

Mr. Grosser commented that any development in the City of Urbana is going to be on the east side. If you want to do development, without knowing the details of the costs or the technical parts of it, we want sewer interceptors in the area where we will grow.

Mr. Ward suggested a friendly amendment that the Plan Commission sees the proposed study as being in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. The amendment was accepted by both Mr. Grosser and Ms. Upah-Bant.

Ms. Upah-Bant wondered if it was not in the Plan Commission's purview to comment on the financial aspects. She did not understand what the funding scenario is, and in the 2001 agreement financing was an issue. Mr. Myers stated that the Mayor did not ask that the Plan Commission limit their comments to one aspect of the report. However, the Plan Commission is an expert on the planning implications and it would be helpful to comment on this aspect of the report. If the Plan Commission members have any other comments about other aspects then he was sure the City Council would appreciate hearing them.

Ms. Upah-Bant inquired as to how the financing in the proposed plan differs from the two-tiered plan that was approved before. Mr. Jamison answered by saying that financing of the construction would be by UCSD through the EPA Low Interest or Revolving Loan Program. UCSD would borrow the funds to construct the new interceptor, and then they would send the City of Urbana a bill twice a year. The City of Urbana is proposing to recover costs from developers as they develop the tributary area using a per acre or population equivalent fee that the City would charge. This fee would be similar to the interceptor cost recovery fee that the UCSD currently charges. The City of Champaign and the Village of Savoy have similar fees that they have developed as part of the developments to the south and west of those communities.

Ms. Upah-Bant expressed concern about those costs being significant enough to impact whether a developer chooses to develop in the City of Urbana versus the City of Champaign. Mr. Jamison stated that the estimated fee would be very competitive with that in other communities. The fee would be lower than some of the communities and higher than the lowest one.

Mr. Pollock clarified that not only would a developer pay for running the lines to the station but also pay a portion of the cost to construct the station. Mr. Jamison said this is correct. Ms. Upah-Bant stated that until development occurs the City of Urbana would be paying for the station. Mr. Jamison replied that the City would need to do some internal financing until we are able to recover the costs through development.

Mr. Myers understood that the UCSD would collect the fees from the developers for the City of Urbana. Mr. Jamison commented that this is the arrangement that UCSD has with the City of Champaign and the Village of Savoy. UCSD collects the fee as they collect their own cost recovery fees from the developer. It is a condition of getting a permit from UCSD.

Ms. Stake wondered if the City is trying to plan mostly for regional business in this area. Ms. Tyler responded by saying that accepting the proposed study would not change the Comprehensive Plan designations, and it would not presume any new designation on the future planning.

The roll call vote on the amended motion was as follows:

Mr. Grosser	-	Yes	Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes
Mr. Pollock	-	Yes	Ms. Stake	-	Yes
Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes	Mr. Ward	-	Yes

The motion was passed by unanimous vote.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) Report Update

Mr. Myers presented an updated report. He identified the issues that the Plan Commission previously had with neighborhood conservation districts, one of which is the definition of a “neighborhood conservation district”. He stated that a “*neighborhood conservation district* is a tool used by some cities to identify and protect the character of established neighborhoods”.

He mentioned that City staff researched how other communities use NCDs. He noted that the City of Champaign has a zoning category for “In-Town – Neighborhood Conservation” within which single-family homes can be converted to apartments but only if they continue to appear as single-family homes. The City of Wilmington, Delaware uses NCDs where “...traditional City Historic District protection is not suitable or warranted, either because of a lack of significant community or political support, or be because the built environment does not meet the criteria for historic resource recognition, as defined by the Secretary of the Interior and the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office.” He also pointed out that the Mixed Office/Residential (MOR) Zoning District the City of Urbana currently uses is similar to a NCD.

Ms. Stake commented that she does not feel that the MOR Zoning District works because it does not help to save the older buildings. Many of the older buildings are now gone. Mr. Myers replied that the purpose of the MOR Zoning District is different than for historic districts. In a historic district, the buildings themselves have intrinsic value and should be repaired rather than replaced. Within the MOR Zoning District the overall built form and character is what matters, whether old or new building. Within a MOR Zoning District, demolition takes place periodically, but new development needs to reinforce to the significant character of the district. Ms. Tyler added that there are mixed results from the MOR Zoning District. It did not create a lot of the adaptive reuse that was hoped for of the older buildings; however, it did accomplish a smaller scale of new development.

Mr. Myers continued his presentation by identifying the other issue about which the Plan Commission had expressed concern. He explained the side-by-side comparison of NCDs with other recommended solutions to neighborhood problems.

Mr. Ward commented that he really likes the table, because this chart presents the issues and problems that the City of Urbana has, identifies the tools available to deal with them, and provides a recommendation on what to do. Ms. Stake added that the table is very thorough and gives them some idea of what needs to be done to preserve a neighborhood.

Ms. Stake inquired if the Lincoln/Busey corridor referred to Lincoln Avenue and the west side of Busey Avenue. Mr. Myers said yes. This corridor has been zoned to allow future development of apartment buildings. The rest of the neighborhood was largely downzoned some years ago and this greatly limited the possibility for redevelopment.

Ms. Stake asked if apartment buildings would be allowed to be developed on the Busey side. Ms. Tyler referred to Maps # 8 and # 9 in the Comprehensive Plan. The Busey side is mostly zoned for single-family residential. There is some University residential zoning up to California Street, where there is some medium residential zoning. This serves as a transitional buffer from the University of Illinois. Mr. Myers pointed out that one of City staff's recommendations is to have design review for the Lincoln/Busey Corridor. If this happens, it would likely be done as a zoning overlay district but would not change the underlying zoning.

Mr. Myers talked about the direction staff was asked to follow by the City Council, which are as follows: (1) information on demolition review, (2) making presentations to neighborhoods on the NCD concept, and (3) considering the idea of forming a special task force to identify potential historic landmarks and districts. As far as making presentations to neighborhoods, City staff has started doing this. They intend to share the neighborhood conservation concept with certain neighborhoods. Staff is also doing more research on demolition in these neighborhoods. Regarding the idea of forming a special task force to identify potential historic landmark and districts, City staff feels that this has merit and that such groups as the Preservation and Conservation Agency (PACA) or the University's historic preservation class can help identify priority properties. In addition, the City Council has requested a joint meeting with the Historic Preservation Commission to discuss ways to get more nominations for local landmarks and districts.

In terms of demolition, City staff researched this extensively. Staff has researched and analyzed all demolitions between 2000 and 2006 in the West Urbana and Historic East Urbana Neighborhoods. Thirty-one demolition permits were issued during this period in the West Urbana Neighborhood. Twenty of the thirty-one demolished buildings were for the expansion of institutions. These included Alpha Chi Omega Sorority, Church of the Latter Day Saints, Leal School, the Presbyterian Church, Twin City Bible Church, Urbana High School and Urbana Middle School. Two-thirds of the demolition permits were a result of institutions needing to expand. This is contrary to a common public perception that demolitions are mostly the result of landlords not maintaining their property and then demolishing their buildings rather than investing in them.

Six of the demolished buildings are currently vacant lots or expanded yard space. Three of the demolished buildings were replaced by apartments, and two of these apartments underwent the City's design review as part of the MOR Zoning District. The remaining two buildings that were demolished were replaced by new single-family houses.

Demolition patterns in the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood are quite different. Eight buildings were demolished. These were replaced by two apartment buildings, two condominium buildings, two vacant lots, a single-family residence and a duplex.

Ms. Tyler noted that some of the demolitions were due to fires, and some were ordered to be demolished by the City of Urbana.

Mr. Myers went on to talk about the demolition review in other communities. Of the thirty-three likely communities surveyed, only three cities were found to have demolition review outside of historic districts: Chicago and Highland Park in Illinois and St. Charles in Missouri. Significantly, even though demolition review took place outside of local historic districts, the demolition review of all three was still historic preservation-based. These cities were also very different than Urbana in that they are part of a large metropolitan economy in terms of housing prices, regional real estate markets, commuting patterns, and income disparities. In summary, City staff found that demolition review which is not historic preservation based does not have a rational basis for stopping demolition. Legally, it would be dangerous to try to adopt such a measure. Therefore, City staff feels strongly that demolition review should only be carried out in the context of historic preservation.

Ms. Tyler concluded by summarizing City staff's recommendation for the following strategies: (1) Consider extending MOR District design review requirements to the Lincoln/Busey corridor; (2) Rezone selected blocks in the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood where zoning is inconsistent with land uses, as identified in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan (Ongoing work with HEUNA on a neighborhood plan will help to facilitate this effort.); (3) Make neighborhoods aware of how private, not-for-profit community development corporations can be formed to achieve neighborhood housing goals (A first step will be the upcoming workshop with Bob Yapp.); (4) Adopt a neighborhood conservation district ordinance that would enable neighborhoods to apply for design review and other NCD protections, using a process similar to that for establishing a historic district; (5) In identifying priorities for protection as local landmarks/ historic districts, request assistance from groups such as PACA and the University of Illinois' historic preservation class making use of existing resources; (6) Meet with

neighborhoods to discuss neighborhood conservation problems and possible solutions (These meetings are underway.); and (7) Staff strongly advises against reviewing demolitions other than for designated local landmarks and historic districts.

Ms. Stake mentioned that she has talked to people, and they say that controlling demolitions is really important in saving neighborhoods. Ms. Tyler commented that the City wants to practice planning in good defensible ways and not have unintended consequences. She believes that the City is being creative and using the concept of NCDs to help preserve those areas. If a particular structure should be retained, then it should be because it is a valuable structure and has historic integrity. There are some cases where it may be desired to demolish a house. A NCD would allow a property owner to rebuild and still be within the pattern of the neighborhood.

Mr. Myers noted that the City was setting up a workshop for November 8th about how neighborhoods can set up community development corporations to solve problems. He also reviewed the City Council's direction to Staff concerning NCDs. They asked City staff to move forward with the first six Staff recommendations but asked for more details on the mechanics of a NCD draft ordinance tailored for Urbana before endorsing the concept fully.

Mr. Pollock inquired if the City Council was asking for feedback from the Plan Commission on this topic. Ms. Tyler replied that this was an update. There will be at least two text amendments result from this that will come back to the Plan Commission for review. Some of the implementation strategies are already occurring.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Mr. Myers gave a brief update on the Comprehensive Plan. City staff followed the recommendation of the Plan Commission by not recommending to the City Council any changes to the Future Land Use maps. Staff did recommend to Council that they adopt an updated Greenways and Trails map, revisions to the existing implementation strategies, and also add the new implementation strategies. The Committee of the Whole forwarded several parts of the Comprehensive Plan update to the City Council but they referred Implementation Strategies (Nos. 88-101) back to the Plan Commission for further public review. As a result, City staff would like to bring this portion back to the Plan Commission in the Spring of 2007 and hold a wider public review of the proposed new implementation strategies.

Mr. Pollock inquired if City staff still had records of names and addresses of people who attended the open public meetings and who served on the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. Mr. Myers said yes. There was a lot of public participation, and City staff kept records of attendees.

Ms. Tyler pointed out that there were a few editorial changes to the strategies since the Plan Commission saw them last. There was some further cleanup and clarification. When they are adopted, City staff will make copies for the Plan Commission members to slip them into their copies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Pollock questioned if the Comprehensive Plan would be updated annually. Ms. Tyler replied that City staff definitely wants to do an annual report. As to whether staff wants to do an

annual amendment it would depend on the need. Staff does anticipate the need to do minor updates to future land use maps when necessary as rezonings occur throughout the year. City staff does not anticipate any of these in the near future but would like to keep the Land Use maps up-to-date.

Mr. Hopkins asked for clarification on whether or not the City Council has already adopted those portions that were forwarded from Committee of the Whole. Mr. Myers replied no but that he anticipated the Council would adopt the revised greenways map and implementation strategies 1-87 at their next meeting.

Ms. Tyler added that Staff had talked to City Council in caucus about not adding the new implementation strategies. City Council feels that the new implementation strategies are important enough to add with a better public process.

Upcoming Plan Commission Meeting

Ms. Tyler mentioned that there will be a rescheduled meeting held on November 30, 2006 to make up for the meeting normally to be held November 23rd but cancelled due to the Thanksgiving Day holiday. There will be three cases to be reviewed by the Plan Commission.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Myers, AICP, Planning Division Manager
Urbana Plan Commission