

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: April 7, 2011

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tyler Fitch, Lew Hopkins, Michael Pollock, Bernadine Stake, Marilyn Upah-Bant

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Jane Burris, Andrew Fell, Ben Grosser, Dannie Otto

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Myers, Planning Manager; Teri Andel, Planning Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: Graham Berry, Bryan Bradshaw, Rebecca Rodgers, Susan Taylor

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

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


2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 24, 2011 Plan Commission meeting were presented for approval. Ms. Stake moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Upah-Bant seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote as presented.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

 Map Showing the Approved Realignment of Lincoln Avenue to Future Olympian Drive

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2139-M-11: A request by Rudolph A. Frasca, on behalf of Frasca & Associates, to rezone a parcel located north of Anthony Drive and east of Willow Road from IN, Industrial Zoning District, to B-3, General Business Zoning District, in order to allow for the construction of an indoor soccer facility.

Robert Myers, Planning Manager, presented this case to the Plan Commission. He indicated that three City applications are under consideration for this property: a rezoning, Final Plat, and a redevelopment agreement, all three of which would be on the April 18, 2011 City Council agenda barring any delays. The petitioner intends to construct an indoor recreational facility this summer in time for fall soccer leagues, and consequently the applicant is working toward construction beginning this May.

Mr. Myers stated the purpose of the proposed rezoning request. He provided background information on the annexation agreement concerning Frasca Airfield and planned development in the area. He referred to an approved preliminary plat for the proposed site. He noted the zoning and current land uses of the proposed site and of the adjacent properties. He spoke about the different business zoning districts and how the B-3 Zoning District relates to the proposed use of indoor soccer facility. He reviewed the LaSalle National Bank criteria that pertain to the proposed rezoning request. He presented staff's recommendation.

Ms. Stake asked why was the development would include a redevelopment agreement. Mr. Myers said it would actually be a development agreement. The property is located within a City tax increment finance district, and the agreement would be to return a portion of the new property taxes to the developer to offset some of the construction costs.

Ms. Stake asked if the developer would construct the indoor soccer facility if they did not receive TIF funding. Mr. Myers responded that the developer has indicated that the project would not be financially feasible without TIF assistance.

Ms. Stake questioned how much TIF money would be used to help fund this project. Mr. Myers responded that he did not have the figures available at that moment but could provide that information.

With no further questions for City staff, Chair Pollock opened the hearing up for public input.

Graham Berry, developer for the proposed indoor soccer facility, stated that he was available to answer any questions that the Plan Commission may have.

Ms. Upah-Bant asked the petitioner if he could disclose how much TIF money would be provided for the project. Mr. Berry replied that the development agreement is for a maximum of

\$270,000 over a ten year period. More than likely it will be less than this amount though.

With no further comments or questions from the public, Chair Pollock closed the public input portion of the hearing and opened it to Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Ms. Upah-Bant moved that the Plan Commission forward Plan Case No. 2139-M-11 to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation for approval. Mr. Hopkins seconded the motion.

Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes	Mr. Pollock	-	Yes
Ms. Stake	-	Yes	Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes
Mr. Fitch	-	Yes			

The motion was approved by unanimous vote. Mr. Myers stated that this case would be presented to the Urbana City Council on Monday, April 18, 2011.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

11. STUDY SESSION

White Street and Springfield Avenue Corridors Analysis

Robert Myers, Planning Manager, gave a presentation on the White Street-Springfield Avenue Corridors Analysis. This study was prepared as part of the Mobility Implementation Plan, a component of the Long Range Transportation Plan funded with a major Federal grant and managed by MTD. When the White Street Springfield Avenue Corridors Study was first proposed in 2008, the City Council was asked for approve a resolution (Resolution No. 2008-07-018R) to indicate their support for City staff participating in the study. The City Council approved that resolution, and now City staff is closing the loop by presenting the study results to the Plan Commission and City Council.

The Mobility Implementation Plan is presently in the second of three phases. Phase 1 included collection of background information and multiple data collection studies were conducted such as onboard bus surveys, neighborhood Transopoly sessions, employer surveys, and stakeholder

surveys. Phase 2 has number of components, including a White Street and Springfield Avenue Corridors Study prepared by the Center of Neighborhood Technology (Chicago).

Chair Pollock assumed that a consulting firm was hired to work with staff from the City of Champaign and the City of Urbana. Was the University of Illinois planning staff involved in the process? Mr. Myers replied yes. The University of Illinois did not want this study to lead to development of a cross campus corridor which would increase traffic say along Springfield Avenue. They want to avoid increasing traffic on campus to reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists. Consequently the concept is to study two development/transit corridors linking the two downtowns to campus, but not a continuous cross-campus corridor.

Chair Pollock asked whether there was any disagreement from the two cities about this. Mr. Myers stated that he was at first skeptical that having two corridors offset by the campus would not lead to increased cross-campus traffic. Chair Pollock commented that he assumed the University of Illinois was quite influential because here is a corridor study without an actual corridor. Mr. Myers remarked that there are two corridors. The White Street corridor is already a high bus usage for the Mass Transit District (MTD) and has higher density residential already. In Urbana, the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, Map 8, shows Springfield Ave. between downtown and campus with a notation "Promote Springfield Ave. as a key transit link from the downtown to campus."

Mr. Myers continued his presentation by reviewing:

- ✚ Corridor Opportunities
- ✚ Transportation and Land Use
- ✚ Retail Opportunities Tomorrow
- ✚ Development Scenarios, including representative blocks
- ✚ Visualizing the Development Process
- ✚ Practices & Policies to Promote Mobility Enhanced Development (MED)
- ✚ Recommendations for MED Implementation, including form-based Zoning.

Chair Pollock asked how long the White Street-Springfield Avenue study has been going on. Mr. Myers replied since 2008. The next step would be the City Council to accept the report.

Chair Pollock inquired as to how much the study cost in terms of consultant fees, etc. Mr. Myers said that he did not know how much the consultant fees were; however, the entire miPLAN process was carried out with a substantial federal grant for several hundred thousand dollars.

Mr. Hopkins stated that his major concern is that the plan relies heavily on developing Springfield Avenue as a mixed use corridor. There are already several mixed use corridors across the two cities that are failing, such as the University parking garage along University Avenue, Lincoln Square Mall, South Neil Street, Green Street MOR Zoning District, etc. We are talking about something that is being imagined in almost total isolation from what is going on in the rest of the City so it probably does not make sense. Before starting a new mixed use corridor we need to support and redevelop what we already have.

Chair Pollock commented that he understands the University of Illinois' influence and the necessity of them being involved in this process. We have what looks like two corridors that are not connected. He would hope that a study like this for the twin cities would be connected because it is one community in terms of transportation. He was concerned about the separation because it is almost like two entirely separate studies, which is probably the only way they could use the federal money, come up with a plan for each city and have the University of Illinois approve of it.

Ms. Stake remarked that she was impressed with all of the work that had been done. There are a lot of good ideas in the report. However, she is disappointed in that the City is not thinking about light rail. Light rail is so much better for the environment. She does not understand why other countries can provide light rail and our country cannot.

Chair Pollock inquired what will happen if the City Council accepts the report as a recommendation of good ideas. What would be needed to begin redevelopment of Springfield Avenue? Mr. Myers replied that he believes the City of Urbana might want to partner with a developer and offer incentives to jumpstart a demonstration development.

Chair Pollock wondered if there were any ideas in the proposed plan that the City could do if there is Tax Increment Finance (TIF) money available and could find developers interested that could be done without the plan. Mr. Myers said yes. One complicating factor is that consolidation of lots to create redevelopment sites is complicated and takes time. Many developers just don't want to deal with this because it can take years.

Chair Pollock questioned if the entire Springfield Avenue area, which is the City of Urbana's segment of the plan, is all located in a TIF district. Mr. Myers answered no, only the eastern portion of Springfield Avenue (east of Coler Avenue) is in a TIF district.

Ms. Stake wondered what the City's main objective is with the proposed analysis. Mr. Myers explained that the main objective of the plan is to show the benefits of the City building up rather than out and doing so in a way that supports transit, walking, and bicycling rather than relying on single-occupancy vehicles. Ms. Stake commented that the City has worked very hard with ideas for bicycling.

Mr. Fitch stated that although he likes the concepts proposed in the plan, he wondered what the point of the plan is. Is the point to have Springfield Avenue be redeveloped or is it to promote traffic into Downtown Urbana so it could be redeveloped? If the point is about Downtown Urbana, unless we punch a hole through campus, it will have limited value. In order to punch a hole through campus, every pedestrian overpass would need to be lifted up; otherwise, vehicle drivers and bicyclists would be driving a block and stopping, drive another block and stopping. The changes that would have to happen for this plan to have an impact would have to be quite profound. We would have to move all the parking off the street, which would be sensitive. He is supportive of the concepts but he is not sure of the point and he is not sure how realistic the plan is.

Chair Pollock fears the point is that there is a giant pool of money available to prepare planning studies, and that although we have got a really nice look at these issues there may be virtually no practical application or financial ability to actually see these things happen. The plan is done. It does have some good ideas in it, but as Mr. Hopkins said this is in some sense going down a road that the City has been on for a long time. Mr. Fitch agreed.

Mr. Hopkins said he was tempted to send this to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation to accept the report, but that the implication that a focus on Springfield Avenue for mixed use development initiatives by the City is inappropriate at this time. In addition, other initiatives by the City of Urbana that are already underway should have priority. He is trying to say that the plan is done and we will accept it, but he wants to make a statement that says the City should not do what the plan on the surface implies we should do. Chair Pollock believes that the City should also not do it necessarily where the plan says we should do it. There are some really good ideas in the plan that might be appropriately attempted elsewhere. Mr. Hopkins felt that the City is already trying to do these ideas elsewhere like on North Broadway, at Lincoln Square, across Green Street from the City building, and elsewhere. His key point would be that the City should not focus significant redevelopment efforts on Springfield Avenue at this time. He has trouble accepting the plan report with the implication that by doing so they are accepting its contents.

Chair Pollock inquired what it means if the City “accepts” the plan. Mr. Myers interpreted “accept” to mean that we received and acknowledged the information. Mr. Hopkins said that he is not willing to leave it at that because for the general public if the City accepts a plan then it can be seen as approving the contents.

Chair Pollock asked what the Plan Commission would like to do at this point. Ms. Stake did not feel that they have studied the report enough. Chair Pollock pointed out that there are four members absent from the meeting that he would like to get their input as well. It was the general consensus of the Plan Commission to hold this item over until a future meeting to allow all the Plan Commission members to study it and provide more comments. Chair Pollock asked if City staff could mail each Commissioner a paper copy.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Myers, AICP, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission