

Meeting Minutes

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

(Comprehensive Planning)

Monday, September 29, 2003, 4:00 pm PRESENT: Plan Commission Members: Ch. Mayor Wescott; Ann Shannon; Mike Phillips; Fred Steffen (Excused, Bud Flood, Karen Aldinger & Lois Feldman) Other Committee Members: Ald. Sevenich, Seiser, Sowieja, Molski & Stroik; Bob Freckmann; Liz McDonald; Carl Rasmussen; Lee Beveridge; Stephanie Lind

ALSO PRESENT: Comm. Dev. Dir. John Gardner; City Clerk, Victoria Zdroik; Jeff Schuler, Dan Bowers & Kathy Foelker, Po. Co. Planning & Zoning; Bernice Woitczak; Hank Becker

1. COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

- Housing Policies and Projections

Chairman Wescott stated instead of hearing from him, John, or Jeff, he wants feedback from commissioners and others in attendance. He wants to start the process of pausing and listening to what you have to say in regard to these issues.

There is quite a bit of discussion going around about the future of smart growth in the county. Smart Growth is fine. The Town of Stockton Plan Commission voted overwhelmingly to stay in the comprehensive planning process. There is legislation before the Assembly of Rural Affairs Committee to repeal the comprehensive planning bill that will go to a hearing early in October.

John Gardner noted for the next meeting, he hopes to have less policy and be more map-oriented. The first issue today is #1 - whether we should adopt a policy to preserve an undeveloped area for future City growth.

Lee Beveridge noted it is his assumption that everything we are doing requires that. You can't have a map or concept of future growth without having someplace to grow to.

Ald. Sowieja felt it would be beneficial to the City, but he is unsure if it is his responsibility to be concerned about the City alone or be concerned about the county as a whole.

John Gardner responded some of the areas along Old Hwy. 18 (between Brilowski and I- 39) have been developed on septic systems and probably will come into the City. If the area east of Brilowski develops on two-acre lots on septic systems, it would effectively put a ring around the City and there would be no expansion. Because of the tax structure and the size of lots created, it is not very efficient to put sewer and water in to those lots.

Ald. Stroik noted the key is the City working with neighboring towns and having open dialogue. Then we are not being a dictatorship to them, we are asking them for their input.

Ann Shannon felt it is important to understand how cities work. We have enough history in terms of what happens when we're not paying enough attention and the costs that effect not only the City taxpayers, but the surrounding townships as well.

Carl Rasmussen felt striking the word "undeveloped" and just say preserve an area for future growth would allow some appropriate development to occur.

Liz McDonald felt if it read "to plan for City growth" would be more the concept that she understands us to be talking about rather than preserving a particular area.

John Gardner discussed #2 - the economic health of the central city. One way of maintaining economic health is to provide areas for residential, commercial and industrial growth.

Ann Shannon noted if the leadership of the townships are enlightened, this would make sense.

Bob Freckmann noted we've grown simply because we grow. It is more a matter of what we do to react to that growth. He doesn't see the emphasis on the growth as much as replacement or whatever we need to do in order to maintain an economically healthy community.

Mike Phillips noted when land annexes to the City, the town doesn't come and request it, the landowner does. Why don't we work with neighboring land owners instead of towns. We're telling them to preserve undeveloped land because Stevens Point has to grow.

Jeff Schuler responded it is the town that does the planning for the township and are going through the same process you are for a comprehensive plan. The policy would be that the City works with them to make sure that they have compatible uses for undeveloped land. The policy would put people on notice that you are thinking about what you will need for the future and that you are willing to talk with your neighbors to make sure that you will do things that will benefit you as well as them.

Ann Shannon questioned if we can reword it to say, "the City will work with neighboring towns and landowners to preserve areas for future City growth".

Chairman Wescott agreed.

Chairman Wescott asked for input on item #2 under New Housing.

Lee Beveridge noted there is not enough vacant land within the current City boundaries for the projected growth numbers that we have been talking about. The City has more types of zoning and more restrictive zonings than the townships, so we are going to be more interested in having tighter control on what occurs in those areas before we get there. He doesn't have any problem with the term "central city" if it is used as being the hub.

Ald. Molski felt we have to be very vigilant on some of the older houses that have been converted to student housing. Some of them are not being taken care of and are dragging down the neighborhoods.

Ald. Sevenich felt because we are so limited with space within the City for building, if we don't build up, we will force people to build outside the City. The older homes and the older areas are nice and we need to keep that going.

Jeff Schuler felt it is a stretch to include the Village of Plover and the county as far as housing. We could encourage the village and county to look

at it in the same way, but the way it is worded, we can't set policy for them. The Village of Plover and county should be taken out.

John Gardner reviewed items #3 and #4 under New Housing. He is not as concerned with what our population is going to be in the year 2020, he is more concerned with having the capacity and land set aside to build new housing units over the next 20 years. He reviewed the equalized-value-per-capita and tax-rate charts. Generally the City and smaller villages have less value per capita than the towns and the Village of Plover. Should equalizing value per capita be taken into account when assigning urban growth boundaries. Should community stress factors be a factor in allocating growth.

Ald. Seiser felt it is important to take those factors into account. There are instances where people work in the City and make a good wage, but live outside the City. Their real estate taxes are not going to the City at all, but they are using City services. There are other instances of retirement age households whose income is from social security with no other income beyond that, yet their taxes per person are higher than the person commuting from outside. As we make decisions on population growth, we need to also define areas where we might not want to grow.

Ald. Molski felt we should definitely try to get our sewer service area increased because that is where we are going to get any additional growth. We have to be able to service it.

John Gardner reviewed New Housing items #5 and #6. Should we encourage development that stabilizes the City's tax rate. We should understand that towns have a similar goal. If we don't understand what is going on in the townships, then we can't have intelligent discussions about their goals.

Fred Steffen noted if we take all of their developed areas which reduces their tax base, then their services cannot keep up with the services they already have and their taxes go up.

Lee Beveridge noted the towns no longer have to service the areas annexed. Their costs go down and it just depends on what percentage of them were taken out.

John Gardner noted one of the biggest things that towns are dealing with is what is happening to the ag land values and the use-value taxing system the State has imposed. The ag values have decreased, however the value of the towns have recently increased. He suspects the increase is due to the increasing value of nonagricultural land used for housing.

Hank Becker noted another reason the ag land values have decreased is because we were once the dairy land state but that is shifting over and the farmers are having to try to come up with more money to keep things going.

John Gardner reviewed the adopted Urban Vision Statement on page 7. Are we going to follow up with housing policies that say more homes should be developed on municipal sewer than on on-site waste systems, or should it be at least proportionate with the township. The trend has been 2 single family homes in the rural area for every 1 on municipal sewer.

Ald. Seiser stated she would definitely like to encourage development in sewerred areas and try figure out ways to decrease those numbers on septic systems.

Fred Steffen felt we should be on municipal sewers, but we have to realize that the cost of the plumbing to get out to some of these areas is going to cost us some money. Taller buildings within the central city are not going to happen right away.

John Gardner reviewed New Housing item #8 and #9 regarding condensing and clustering development and zones for maximum lot sizes. Should the lot sizes be smaller so that we consume less land.

Fred Steffen felt if the City went to one-quarter acre lot sizes, Plover would get all the development. Unless we do it in harmony together, I don't think we could get away with it.

Chairman Wescott noted many alderpersons have expressed opposition to setting maximum lot sizes.

Ald.. Seiser felt it is an option that we really need to investigate further. If Plover got the development, would that be all bad. They are on sewer and water.

Ald.. Sowieja noted as a City policy, the idea behind this is to maximize the land that we have. A person developing land would make more money by dividing the land into smaller parcels. There will always be people that want to build out in the country, and if you want a big lot, I guess that is the place you will have to do it.

Bob Freckmann felt the way it is printed, we would create zones of maximum lot sizes which means to him that there will also be areas that will not be in this zone.

Ann Shannon agreed and noted we need diversity. We don't all want the same things.

Ald.. Stroik felt as long as there are zones of maximum lots also, he feels better about it.

John Gardner entertained input on New Housing item #10 with regard to reserving sewer capacity for existing homes next to but not in the City.

Ald.. Molski felt sooner or later the septic systems of those homes next to the City will fail and we have to be ready to take care of them.

Ald.. Seiser noted we will be the appropriate provider for those areas adjacent to the City.

John Gardner noted the people in the boundary adjustment area and Przybylski Subdivision came in because of bad water. Some of these areas adjacent to the City have been included for 20 years and show no inclination to annex.

Ald.. Molski suggested maybe we need to look at those areas again adjacent to the City.

Chairman Wescott agreed. If they aren't ever going to come in, will we continue to carry that area.

Ald.. Stroik questioned whether these areas would have to come into the City if their water went bad.

John Gardner responded no, they would not. They can replace their septic systems.

He moved on to item #11 regarding impact fees. As an example, our park fees would be an example of much like impact fees.

Ald.. Seiser was in agreement with impact fees. It seems to be appropriate for us to continue to learn more about impact fees and know what our options are. Why should those on existing residents pay money so that we can make sure someone outside of the City can come in.

Ann Shannon suggested the wording "investigate strategy, such as impact fees, to be charged on new development".

Chairman Wescott noted we need to be aware of what we are currently doing regarding impact fees. We're going to have the vulnerability because we have so much capacity now.

John Gardner felt Ann's suggestion is the way to go.

Ald.. Sowieja noted his only concern is that we don't get crazy with impact fees.

John Gardner requested input on #12 Design for New Housing. Should new housing be subject to design review standards. He reviewed the photos showing new homes with garages closer to the street. Is this something deserving of regulation?

Ald.. Sowieja noted if there are people that don't like that design, don't move in there.

Carl Rasmussen felt he is inclined to let the market decide the options. It is a little heavy handed being out there projecting what design standards are desirable. Its a larger issue than what we could formulate and try to regulate.

Liz McDonald agreed. She didn't feel we should get into these kinds of issues with single family.

Bob Freckmann noted even if he did not agree with the particular design, it is maybe a case of where we are overstepping our authority.

Lee Beveridge noted if you only have a 100 foot lot, it is pretty hard to do anything else with it. He doesn't feel we have the right to legislate it.

Fred Steffen felt we are micro-managing when we go that far.

Liz McDonald noted in some cities, and we have some, they have garages off an alley and all you see from the front is houses which is kind of nice.

Jeff Schuler stated it is not the common practice in Stevens Point to regulate design. He feels designs for single family homes should be left up to the individuals. There may be a case to be made for design review for multiple family and commercial buildings.

Ald.. Seiser agreed. Traditionally, garages were built in the back. Now, the market is suggesting that as spaces are being filled in on these older, smaller, lots or older houses are replaced, they are doing the design with garages in the front. She doesn't find that consistent with the style of housing that is the older housing stock.

Chairman Wescott stated he is hearing no design review in single and two family. He understands Ald.. Seiser's concerns, and maybe we want to look into the possibility of some standards for the older neighborhoods.

Jeff Schuler suggested maybe a sub-committee would want to study this and report back.

Ann Shannon suggested maybe we should encourage more neighborhood groups.

Chairman Wescott suggested staff prepare language to address the older areas of the City.

Meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

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