

Meeting Minutes

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

(Comprehensive Planning)

Monday, February 24, 2003 - 3:00 P.M. PRESENT: Chairman Mayor Wescott; Jeff Zabel; Elbert Rackow; Fred Steffen; Lois Feldman; Karen Aldinger; Bud Flood

ALSO PRESENT: Comm. Dev. Dir. John Gardner; Ald. Phillips, Nealis, Sowieja, Molski, Sevenich & Seiser; Po. Co. Planning Dir. Chuck Kell; Po. Co. Senior Planner Jeff Schuler; Po. Co. Assis. Planner Dan Bowers; Po. Co. Comp. Plan Assis. Sarah Nimmer; Richard Holden; Ken Shibilski; Bob Woehr; Anton Anday; Stevens Point Journal, Kate Garsombke; Po. Co. Gazette, Gene Kemmeter

1. Comprehensive Planning

Chairman Wescott stated the purpose today is a presentation by Jeff Schuler of the Portage County Planning Office, comments from John Gardner of the Community Development Office, and then open up for general comments from those who have taken time to join us today. He noted although this is a formal Plan Commission meeting, he wants it to be an informal session and if anyone has questions, feel free to ask.

Jeff Schuler stated we are currently unique in that we are the only county with all units of government working together on the same project. The process started back in September of 2001 and we have a 3-year timetable, with completion to be in June of 2004. He reviewed the process to the present. He showed slides which included the data from the surveys and preliminary projections from the State of Wisconsin. He provided aerial photographs from 1948, 1968, 1992, and 2000 showing development in Stevens Point, Village of Plover, and along CTH. J in Stockton. We will talk about what Stevens Point is now, what you think it needs to be, and figure out what policies are needed to guide it in that direction.

John Gardner stated we have higher employment than other counties in the Government and Finance/Insurance/Real Estate sectors because of the University, Sentry, Associated Bank, and the Noel Group, which adds diversity to our economy.

Jeff Schuler stated they are now at a point to begin actually writing the Stevens Point Comprehensive Plan. We plan to start with the Stevens Point Plan of 1982 and modify it to meet the current State requirements. We prepared an outline to show what the document would need and divided it into the 9 required chapters. Our job is to go through the current plan and keep what is relevant, add the new data that is important, and create goals, objectives, and policies to guide the plan. We plan to distribute background information between meetings. You would study the information, develop questions, and bring them to the meetings for discussion.

It is our intention to have a first draft, including all nine elements discussed and brought together in a single document, by Fall. You would review the document, fine tune it where needed, and then make a recommendation to the council for review and approval. Because this is a county-wide project, it is our job to work through any problems that may arise between municipalities and provide corrective measures.

Chairman Wescott noted he is in favor of broadening who sits at the table. He has been talking with city staff about meeting on a regular basis with our colleagues in Plover, Whiting, and Hull and work together on crafting a plan.

John Gardner noted the real question is how are we going to divide up the expected growth between municipalities and where will we accommodate that growth. We have a lot in common with the village, more so than the competition that is between us. We market the region cooperatively with Marshfield, Rapids, and Plover, and we can build on that cooperation.

Ald. Nealis questioned with this competition, is there any part of the discussion for a regional tax base or tax base sharing to eliminate the competition.

John Gardner responded from his point of view, the conversation is only limited by our imagination.

Chairman Wescott noted he has had conversations with surrounding municipal mayors and there is a formal request that will be coming regarding tax shells. We have been exploring the idea of tax shells for about one year. We would be looking at creating a zone that would incorporate Stevens Point, Wausau, Marshfield, Wisconsin Rapids, and Plover. It would require some changes in State law.

John Gardner suggested there are alternatives that would not require a change to state law. As an example, look at the ambulance service. The service has been provided by the County which is a regional government. This area was able to accomplish a higher level of service and a sharing of the cost of that service without any change in State law.

Ald. Sowieja questioned with regard to comprehensive planning, is it the ultimate goal to come up with a map showing exactly where we want certain things to be developed.

Jeff Schuler responded we have to have a map to show where certain types of growth should be directed in the future, but the map has to be based on the policies set by the information provided. The zoning will have to match the policies in this plan. When this plan is all done, the Zoning Code will be redone to match this plan.

John Gardner stated the Council can make zone changes based on a rational and political basis. After 2010, the new law says that all zone changes have to be in conformance with this adopted plan.

Jeff Zabel questioned who determines what the future population of Stevens Point should be and where the growth should be, and who should determine where we should have commercial and industrial growth. Can we do it within the city or do we need to look at a bigger picture.

Jeff Schuler responded the Plan Commission is charged by the State to draw up a plan for the community. Based on all the discussions you are going to have, including public input, you will try to figure out what makes sense.

John Gardner questioned whether there will be coordination between different entities expecting different amounts of growth. Is there going to be some time when the towns and the urban area get together and say "here's our vision statement and here is how the numbers are going to plug into those vision statements", or is Stockton, Hull and Town of Plover going to plan for the same large increase of population and as a result, over plan for too much development.

Jeff Schuler responded that is where county staff comes in. County staff attends every meeting in the county and provides direction. As things develop, staff indicates to the towns and villages what patterns we think are developing. He noted there are 14 local area planning goals put out by the State, and if you get grant money, you are supposed to address them.

John Gardner questioned who county staff wants to be a part of this conversation on putting this plan together. We know the Plan Commission

has to recommend something to the Common Council for review and approval by the time the grant money runs out next summer.

Chairman Wescott noted it clearly makes sense to have the Common Council work with the Plan Commission. He suggested, at the absolute minimum, he would like to see the alderpersons (if not all of them, the Finance Committee Chairman and the Council President), 2 people forwarded from the City Park & Recreation Committee, 1 person from the Police and Fire Commission, 1 person from Water and Sewer Commission, and 1 person from the Transit Commission included. He would like to see representation from the schools and the university. In addition to the monthly meetings, we will provide many opportunities for public input.

Karen Aldinger suggested including representatives from downtown businesses as well as businesses in other areas of the city. She doesn't know how they are organized.

Elbert Rackow noted he would like to have a public hearing for input after we have dealt with each segment of the plan.

Lois Feldman questioned whether the additional representatives mentioned would have a vote.

Chairman Wescott noted he had considered giving them voting rights, but the law says the Plan Commission members will ultimately be voting on this and then send it on to the council. He feels these representatives need to have a sense that their vote counts.

Bud Flood felt the suggested representatives were adequate. Beyond that, there will be plenty of opportunity for others to attend the public hearings.

Jeff Schuler asked is the fourth Monday going to be the meeting day, and how many members will we need to distribute materials to.

Following discussion, commissioners determined the meetings would be the fourth Monday at 4:00 p.m.

Chairman Wescott noted county staff will need to distribute materials to City Plan Commission, 11 alderpersons, 2 people in the Parks Dept., 1 on Police & Fire, 1 on Water & Sewer, 1 on Transit, 1 from Historic Preservation, 2 people from the university, and 1 or 2 from public schools. Jeff Schuler noted the diamonds were indicated to be per month. Next meeting we will deal with Issues and Opportunities.

John Gardner noted any materials distributed should be considered "talking documents". If we are going to start out with Issues and Opportunities, maybe we should split these up into two categories. One part of our thinking should be toward the existing city limits. Commercial development on Division St., do you like it or not? South Business 51, is that what you want to see 10 years from now? Traffic intersections, is the intersection at Franklin/Division Sts. a good intersection? Fourth Ave. through the university, should we extend Maria Dr. east of the university so it takes some traffic off Fourth Ave.? We should spend a fair amount of time talking about the existing city. The second category would be city expansion.

He wants the Plan Commissioners to think about the entire city, the alderpersons to think about the whole city and particularly their districts, and make lists of issues for the next meeting.

Meeting ended.

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