

MINUTES
McLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2010, 4:00 P.M.
GOVERNMENT CENTER, ROOM 404
115 EAST WASHINGTON STREET, BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

Members Present:

Carl Teichman, Chairman; George Benjamin, Vice-chair; Joe Butcher, Bill Doud, Neale McCormick, Jay Reece, Shane Rutherford

Members Absent:

Mary Jefferson

Others Present:

McLean County Regional Planning Commission: Paul Russell, Executive Director; Rick Nolan, Community Planner; Jennifer Sicks, Transportation Planner; Teresa Casselman, Office Manager. City of Bloomington: Mark Woolard, City Planner. McLean County: Mike Behary, County Planner. McLean County Farm Bureau: Kelly Francis. Jhun Medina. Tari Renner.

Call To Order:

Mr. Teichman called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. He noted Mr. Medina and Mr. Renner were present, but they had not yet been appointed by the County Board.

Consent Agenda:

No requests for removal of items from the consent agenda were made. Mr. Reece moved that the Consent Agenda be approved as presented. Mr. Doud seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Regular Agenda:

Consistency Review - Stringtown Lakes - Special Use

Mr. Behary provided an update regarding the Stringtown Lakes proposal. He reported the sixth public meeting had been held and indicated the next meeting would be April 16. He indicated some discussion had been held at the last meeting regarding the dust issue, and indicated photographic evidence of other residential areas situated near gravel pits had been supplied. He stated he expected the County Board to consider the issue at their May or June meeting.

Mr. Teichman said the Commission had previously tabled the consistency review so that more information might be available to consider. He indicated public hearings were still in progress, and the Commission could table the review until the May meeting to allow for more testimony and evidence. Mr. Renner said because of the special use permit, the burden of proof was on the petitioner. Mr. Behary explained there were seven standards that must be met for a special use approval, as determined by the County Board. Mr. Reece said there were parents wanting Unit 5 to take a public stance opposing the gravel pit. He indicated Unit 5 had never previously taken a position regarding a development project. He indicated there had been some school board discussion about the project because the consistency review was on the Commission meeting agenda. He stated he would not be voting in favor of the special use. He added there were people who would like to have the topic discussed at the next

school board meeting. He anticipated discussing whether the school board should take a position on public or private developments, and if so, whether it should take a position on the Stringtown Lakes project. Mr. Reece requested that action be taken, since the consistency review was listed as an agenda item. Mr. Benjamin noted that the last time the Commission considered the project, it was approved with concerns about noise and dust. He asked if there was any evidence regarding the abatement provided by the rubber-lined equipment. Mr. Behary said it was discussed at the hearing and it was indicated that the noise is reduced with such equipment.

Mr. McCormick stated that the consistency review form ranks consistency with the comprehensive plan, and determining consistency with the adopted comprehensive plan is the responsibility of a Commission member. He questioned whether another vote on the project was necessary since the Commission had voted on the project previously. Mr. Russell indicated that the project location was the same, but the project had been withdrawn and resubmitted. Mr. Reece reiterated he preferred the Commission consider the project at this meeting and indicated that the Commission might want to consider noise and health issues in addition to consistency with the comprehensive plan. He added that it is also the responsibility of the Commission members to consider the viewpoints of the public body they represent. He added that it was his desire to have the vote so that the viewpoints of Unit 5 were on record with respect to this project. Mr. Russell explained that while noise and dust are not specific criteria, these factors are considered in determining consistency with surrounding land use. Mr. Reece stated that the school board's function is not to take a public position on development. However, the school board does have representation on the Regional Planning Commission, where a position can be taken.

Mr. Reece moved the Commission proceed to a vote on the project. Mr. Butcher seconded the motion. Mr. McCormick asked that the staff explain the differences in the project from the earlier consideration. Mr. Behary explained that the petitioners withdrew the previous plan, and resubmitted the project with the processing plant located farther from the school. Mr. McCormick noted that there were several similar type plants located and operating near residential areas within the community. Mr. Russell pointed out that the project received a favorable review previously, and the petitioner has taken additional steps to improve the project since then. Mr. Benjamin asked about the testimony regarding other community schools located near gravel pits. Mr. Behary said a person had made a site visit and provided photographic evidence of a school site adjoining a gravel pit. He added there were no plans to reclaim the gravel pit to residential development at that site.

Mr. Butcher indicated it is the responsibility of the Commission to consider consistency with the comprehensive plan, and leave other issues to the appropriate body. He requested a roll call vote on the motion.

Mr. Teichman explained a yes vote would accept the staff recommendation of a "C" rating and approve the project. The motion passed with Mr. Benjamin, Mr. Butcher, Mr. McCormick, Mr. Rutherford, and Mr. Teichman voting yes; Mr. Reece voting no; and Mr. Doud abstaining from the vote. Several Commission members expressed their appreciation of the discussion about the project and the Commission's role in consistency review.

Consistency Review - Eagle View South Elementary School

Mr. Woolard presented the rezoning and preliminary plan for the Eagle View South Elementary School project and described its location near the intersection of GE Road and Towanda Barnes Road. He reported the intergovernmental staff did not support the project, and it received an "E" rating. He explained there were noise and dust concerns because of grain silos located adjacent to the property. He added an airport flight path was situated over the school site and there was a concern regarding noise. In addition, the comprehensive plan recommends schools be located away from major streets. He stated the Constitution Trail does not extend to the school site. He said the petitioners had improved some traffic plans, but there were serious concerns about the project.

Mr. Reece explained that he would be abstaining from the vote. He explained the grain silos and processing areas were planned to be removed if the school site was developed. He said there were ongoing discussions and negotiations with the owners of the property. Mr. Teichman pointed out that jet traffic and the accompanying noise would continue. Mr. Reece said the area is being developed as residential and he did not consider the noise during the day to be a concern. He explained that Unit 5 was particularly interested in this site since it was an opportunity to build a school closer to town and minimize bussing. He said other Unit 5 schools are located on busy streets and there have been no problems with safety issues.

Mr. Teichman asked why Unit 5 was requesting a rezoning at this time. Mr. Reece explained the school district did not buy property as an investment, so the purchase was contingent on being able to use it for a school.

Mr. McCormick asked why the project received an "E" rating. Mr. Russell explained that the project was not consistent with the comprehensive plan. Mr. Woolard added the project site was proposed to be largely regional/highway commercial development. Mr. Russell said the project did not provide minimal features in support of the comprehensive plan, which would result in a "D" or "E" rating. The project received an "E" rating because it did not provide optional features beyond what is typical for a school site.

Mr. Reece asked why open space and other features elements were considered not applicable. He said there is green space affiliated with a school and asked why the project review did not consider that green space as providing an optional feature. Mr. Russell explained that review element applied to greenways or bikeways that were designated in the Regional Greenways Plan, and there were no connections shown between the site and a greenway designated in that plan. Mr. Reece asked if there was any mechanism in the review to consider the green space provided by a school site. Mr. Russell advised that issue is not specifically addressed on the consistency review form, and perhaps that issue could be considered in the future.

Mr. McCormick said information provided by Mr. Reece changed some considerations indicated on the form, such as the elevators located south of the project. Mr. Reece said the decision should be based on what was submitted. Mr. McCormick asked if the decision should be delayed for staff to look at updated information. Mr. Russell said there was nothing for staff to consider unless they were provided with new information.

Mr. Doud stated he would abstain from the vote, but noted that it did make sense to locate a school site closer to residential areas. Mr. Reece asked for a roll call vote. Mr. Teichman indicated a yes vote would accept the consistency review report and not approve the project. The consistency review was not accepted, with Mr. Butcher, Mr. McCormick and Mr. Teichman voting no; Mr. Benjamin and Mr. Rutherford voting yes; and Mr. Reece and Mr. Doud abstaining from the vote.

Items of Information or Discussion :

Update on Information Forum

Mr. Nolan reported there were 85 reservations for the Information Forum to be held April 21. He said that number was similar to previous information forums.

Articles from March 2010 issue of *New Urban News*

Mr. Russell provided an overview of this article about Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants. He explained the Town of Normal was recently awarded a TIGER grant for

the multi-modal center. He said it was a \$1.5 billion grant program that provides less money for highways than have conventional transportation bills, and more money for transit and complete streets that incorporate alternative modes of transportation. He explained that demands have exceeded available funds, prompting calls for a second round and making something similar a major feature of the upcoming transportation reauthorization.

Articles from Fall 2009 issue of *Trip Planner Magazine*

Mr. Russell reported the article titled "The Streetcar in American Life" gave a detailed history of streetcars in this country. The article provided a snapshot of historical urban development because the streetcar played a significant role in shaping urban areas. Initially, the streetcar enabled urban sprawl by allowing people to live away from downtown areas. The growing use of automobiles made streetcars irrelevant and eventually led to their decline. He said the author noted the contributions of General Motors and other automotive interests in expediting that decline by manipulating the replacement of the streetcars with GM-made buses. Today, streetcars and light rail are being used to encourage more compact urban-style development, as opposed to lower density urban sprawl.

Mr. Doud stated that he objected to the term "urban sprawl" when describing modern development, which he thinks improves the quality of life and provides people with the American dream of owning a home.

Executive Director's Annual Evaluation

Mr. Teichman reported that it was time for Mr. Russell's annual performance review and asked the Commission members to submit a paragraph evaluating Mr. Russell and the role of the Commission. He asked that the members email him with those comments before April 22 to be used by the Executive Committee in their decision.

Adjournment:

Mr. Butcher moved for adjournment. Mr. Doud seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Teresa Casselman
Office Manager