

MINUTES
McLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING, WEDNESDAY, May 3rd, 2017, 4:00 P.M.
GOVERNMENT CENTER, ROOM 404
115 EAST WASHINGTON STREET, BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

Members Present:

Mary Jefferson, Chair; Michael Buragas, Vice Chair; Michael Gorman, Executive Committee Representative; Mary Kramp; Glen Ludwig; Linda Olson; Carl Teichman; Mark Wylie; Joseph Cleary

Members Absent:

Tyler Wrezinski; Carl Olson

Others Present:

McLean County Regional Planning Commission - Vasudha Pinnamaraju, Executive Director; Jennifer Sicks, Transportation Planner; Jamal Smith, Assistant Planner; Daniel Handel, Assistant Planner; Emily Lutz, Assistant Planner; Jordan Brown, Office Manager; Town of Normal – Taylor Long, Associate Planner; McLean County – Melissa Dougherty-O’Hara, Planner; Public – Gretchen Monti, Vicky Smith

Call To Order:

Ms. Jefferson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum.

Public Comment:

None

Consent Agenda:

Mr. Gorman moved that the Consent Agenda be approved as presented. Mr. Wylie seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Regular Agenda:

Ms. Jefferson requested that Ms. Pinnamaraju expand on the BN Beyond event. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that BN Beyond is an event led by the Chamber. Its purpose is to highlight regional collaboration among other things; BN Advantage efforts will be discussed. Ms. Jefferson asked if any of the commission members would like to attend this event.

Items of Information or Discussion:

Information Forum

Ms. Jefferson started the discussion with the idea of an action committee for after the event. Her idea was to answer the question “Is there something we can do after the information forum?” Ms. Pinnamaraju agreed. She added that staff is brainstorming about how to better communicate what happens after these events. She noted that Town of Normal Comprehensive Plan will have a proposed innovation district, a concept that originated at the 2016 information forum. She also

pointed out that the fiscal impact discussion in the community stemmed from the 2015 Speaker, Chuck Mahron, from Strong Towns.

Mr. Gorman suggested having a small group discussion as to what the next steps would be after the event. Ms. Jefferson encouraged the commissioners to be more proactive in this area. Mr. Cleary added that this year's topic is very useful and directly related to the Uptown redevelopment that is going on right now. Mr. Teichman added that this topic challenges the types of development along Veteran's Parkway. He stated that we need to think a little more broadly in terms of other growth opportunities.

Ms. Kramp inquired how to fill the room. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that the average number of attendance at previous Information Forums has been 125, but last year was an exception because we were seeking sponsorships. She agreed the need to fill the room and sought advice as to how to reach out to more people. Mr. Ludwig added that a before and after effort needs to take place along with a good amount of energy to get people to the event. He added about an after piece, press releases, etc. needs to happen. Ms. Pinnamaraju agreed and noted that it may be very resource intensive. Mr. Teichman inquired if there is any thought about looking at other partners to spread the marketing piece out. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that we need to evaluate if this is the right format for the Information Forum. After additional discussion, the Commissioners agreed to set up a Sub-Committee to discuss this topic further. Ms. Jefferson, Ms. Kramp, Mr. Ludwig, Mr. Cleary, and Mr. Teichman all signed up for the Sub-Committee. Discussion took place as to when to get a sub-committee together to discuss future events.

Ms. Pinnamaraju ended the discussion by explaining that we have reached out to ULI after this year's event. The discussions were about identifying developers and mechanisms to implement smart growth development projects.

Update on Regional Housing Study

Ms. Pinnamaraju provided a brief background on the purpose of the regional housing study. MCRPC staff realized they need to look at housing regionally right after the Bloomington Comprehensive Plan Process. MCRPC waited until there was some assurance from the state in regards to State Metropolitan Planning Funds to issue an RFQ. MCRPC partnered with City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, and Bloomington Housing Authority on this project. Ms. Pinnamaraju then pointed out some key findings the consultants found within this study: housing is generally over-built in BN, there is a mismatch between existing housing typologies and the household size, generally speaking the community is affordable with the exceptions for low income families and seniors, community offers limited solutions for homeless populations, and supportive housing options for individuals with ages 18 to 64 with disabilities has also been identified as an issue in our community.

Mr. Wylie asked if there was a list of the Steering Committee Members anywhere in the draft. Ms. Pinnamaraju responded no but that she will request that list be added. She also reminded that this is a draft so if there are any concerns or questions to pass them on to MCRPC so they can ask the consultant.

Ms. Pinnamaraju added that there should be another draft by the next Commission Meeting. The consultants have picked five sites to do some typology analysis. Ms. Pinnamaraju then explained why these five sites are different. Mr. Cleary questioned why they would develop on greenfield spaces when they could develop anywhere. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that those sites have pre-annexation agreements that have been in place for 10 years or so. She also pointed out that most of the sites were commercial sites. Mr. Gorman also pointed out that people do live above some of these commercial sites. Ms. Pinnamaraju agreed. Mr. Cleary brought up the concern about bussing children to schools. This led to a discussion about school locations and their contributions to sprawl.

Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that the consultants are going to use those five sites to demonstrate some of the challenges that we have to address. She then directed the Commission to different points the consultant came up with as the challenges. Ms. Kramp asked about financial concerns due to the size of the home. Mr. Cleary stated that the three bedroom and two and a half bath model will sell to everyone. Ms. Pinnamaraju agreed. Mr. Teichman then questioned if that model is what the market wants. Mr. Cleary explained that developers have narrowed this down to what will sell and what will make a profit. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that when the consultants presented this to the Steering Committee, these new models were considered risky ventures by banks and developers. Mr. Teichman stated that any rental in the downtown is full and are having no problems renting.

Ms. Pinnamaraju then started the discussion on affordability and how we are an affordable community, generally speaking. She indicated that we are not affordable to low income and the elderly, two most vulnerable groups. Housing options for the homeless and supportive services are needed as well. Ms. Pinnamaraju added that since it is a draft, if anyone sees anything that is missing to let her know.

Ms. Kramp asked Ms. Pinnamaraju to talk about her concerns with working with the bus service as an MPO. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that at this time it is limited to what is mandated by FTA. There is much room for improvement in coordination.

Ms. Olson inquired if the rural communities were taken into account in the study. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that since MCRPC is an MPO the study had certain boundaries due to funding parameters. She also explained that supportive services are limited in rural communities. There also needs to be a certain population density to make some of the typologies work and could be a challenge in rural communities. Ms. Pinnamaraju stated that this is an area where she would like to seek additional funding opportunities to help serve rural communities better.

Adjournment:

Mr. Teichman moved for adjournment. Mr. Wylie seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jordan Brown
Office Manager