

MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015, 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
109 EAST OLIVE STREET, BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Balmer, Mr. Cain, Mr. Cornell, Mr. Diamond, Mr. Wills, Mr. Pearson, Mr. Protzman, Mr. Scritchlow, Mr. Suess, Mr. Stanczak

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Kevin Kothe, City Engineer
Ms. Vasu Pinnamaraju, Executive Director of McLean County Regional Planning Commission
Mr. Mark Woolard, City Planner
Mr. Bob Yehl, Assistant City Engineer

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Cain called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL: Mr. Woolard called the roll. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

MINUTES: The Commission reviewed the February 25, 2015 minutes. Mr. Wills moved to approve the February 25, 2015, minutes as presented. Mr. Pearson seconded the motion which passed by a vote of 10-0 with the following votes being cast on roll call: Mr. Scritchlow-yes; Mr. Pearson-yes; Mr. Cain-yes; Mr. Balmer-yes; Mr. Protzman-yes; Mr. Wills-yes; Mr. Stanczak-yes; Mr. Diamond-present; Mr. Cornell-present; Mr. Suess-yes.

REGULAR AGENDA:

Public hearing and review of the City of Bloomington Bicycle Master Plan

Mr. Woolard introduced the Bicycle Plan and stated Mr. Yehl is here to make a presentation. Mr. Yehl acknowledged the League of Illinois Bicyclists who has much experience and guided us through the process. He also acknowledged the steering committee, staff, community advocacy groups, McLean County Regional Planning, and the public who was greatly involved in the whole process.

He explained the process started with the City Council approving the work in October 2013, then a steering committee was installed which provided guidance and the tone for the project. There was public outreach through paper surveys in all of the water billings which reached 24,000 households. There also was outreach through Mind Mixer which is an interactive internet site similar to Face Book but with surveys. These resulted in 700 completed surveys. There was a brainstorming session with 90 participants and then a public meeting in November. The Steering Committee thought it was important to take the plan to the Planning Commission for a public hearing. The plan work was coordinated with the existing trail system and Normal's Bicycle Master Plan.

Mr. Yehl showed examples of the different types of bikeways and structures in the plan. These included shared bike lanes, designated lanes, combined bike/parking lanes, side paths, underpasses, bridges and signs. He explained the guiding principles such as the target audience, implementation as funding allows, achieve early success, and balancing lanes with parking. He stated there are 400 different segments of bikeways that they studied that came from the brainstorming session and public input. He highlighted the maps of existing and recommended bikeways. The plan and future improvements will be coordinated with IDOT, Normal, Route 66 and other agencies. The plan recommends the city adopt a bike parking ordinance. Three components of the plan are education, enforcement and encouragement.

Mr. Balmer stated there was not much discussion in the plan on bicycle stickers. A fee can be based on use and geared towards education and will deter theft. Mr. Yehl said the plan does not cover everything comprehensively and it recommends that it be updated every five to ten years. There will be opportunities to do that as we move along. Implementing the plan will involve multi-years of work, training, evaluations and considering obtaining a bicycle friendly designation. The consultant fee was around \$12,000 with some of it paid by an advocacy group. There was discussion on other funding options and implementation. Engineering keeps the plan in mind and looks for opportunities to incorporate plan recommendations with road projects. The master plan for the Constitutional Trail was incorporated into this plan.

There was discussion on the effect of the plan on future growth and whether to include bike and trail requirements for development. Mr. Yehl stated that it may be another step beyond the scope of this plan. It may take ten plus years to get to the higher cost priorities.

Chairman Cain opened the public hearing. Mr. Mike McCurdy, 1403 Chadwick Drive, Normal, was sworn in and said he represents the transit system and the Connect Transit Board of Trustees. He said the Board adopted a resolution supporting the city and the League of Illinois Bicyclists in creating the plan. He urged the commission to approve the plan and move it forward for council's approval. Connect transit advocates planning that embraces all transportation modes, including bicycles. They plan on purchasing buses with racks to hold three bikes which is one more than their current two rack buses. Bikes are the ideal connection for customers to get to bus stops from their origin or destinations. He said research shows 70 percent of millennials use multi modes for one trip. This plan should make bicycling safer and increase bus ridership.

Stefanie Michaelis, 712 E. Olive Street, was sworn in and stated she is a lifelong biker, a regular commuter and the secretary of the Bike BloNo Board. She said she urges approval of the plan. They have worked to promote bikes for everyday transportation, to bring together the City of Bloomington, League of Illinois Bicyclists, and the Friends of the Constitution trail to help fund and create this plan. They worked to get a unanimous Council vote to create this plan. She said we have to focus on safety. The road is for everyone to use and studies show that the safest place for a person to ride is on the road. A study showed bike lanes reduced bike related injuries by 75 percent. The sidewalks will also be safer for pedestrians. There is an economic benefit in that bikers spend more money locally. She also said there are numerous health benefits to bicyclists and this plan will have an overwhelming impact on our community.

Julian Westerhout, 816 E. Monroe Street, was sworn in stated he is a dedicated, lifelong cyclist, is on the board of the Friends of the Constitution Trail, a member of the McLean County Wheelers and Bike BloNo. He stated he was a member of the Steering Committee and he thought the process was an extremely good example of a combination of public and private input into the process. People at the brainstorming session were quite amazed at all of the input being taken. He said after riding the streets for years he has noticed a difference with the recent sharrows and lane markings placed on Prairie and Front. Cars are more respectful and give more space. They provide a safer aspect for those who may not be as comfortable riding in traffic. It is a great plan.

Mr. Balmer stated he thinks this is an excellent plan and is in favor of recommending to the City Council that they accept it but would also recommend that they look into more private funding for some of the upgrades and extensions. It should become a part of the comprehensive plan for future development. We are saying it now for sidewalks and we should include this also. Mr. Wills said this is right in line with the dedicated green space for new development and has even more merit. There is revenue potential. There is a demand for it. It is great to have a formal plan in front of council to move things forward and to identify those high impact and priority items. Mr. Suess stated he is very excited about the plan as well. He said he wants to disclose that he is a board member of Bike BloNo and have helped with the initial advocacy for the moving forward with the plan but has received no money for such. He said as part his comprehensive plan, subcommittee work he has seen people wanting to see this kind of infrastructure and bike lanes. Mr. Stanczak said the City got its money worth as the plan is comprehensive, evidences much thought to competing considerations and establishes effective priorities. Commissioners emphasized how the plan addresses all ridership aspects and is not just for the recreational rider. Mr. Diamond stated the plan's amount of data, work and wealth of information is phenomenal. It is useful in other areas. Mr. Scritchlow questioned the cost for development but said it is a great plan.

Chairman Cain closed the public hearing.

Mr. Pearson stated he has a question for Mr. Yehl. The Commission unanimously approved a motion to reopen the public hearing.

Mr. Pearson asked why they recommend no widening to the sidewalk in certain areas? Mr. Yehl said that in some cases we are widening the sidewalks but this can create tension because people view that green area up to the road as their front yard. In some cases we do widen them and some we do not as we are trying to strike a balance. The Commission discussed the long range plan and how there are other ways to finance things. Mr. Yehl said much of it is done ourselves.

Ms. Michaelis explained the risk for bikers on sidewalks is greater than on the street because motorists do not see the biker and turning vehicles could hit them. Also the sidewalks can destroy bikes. Biking on the roads is safer.

Mr. McCurdy stated he believes bikers are covered under their home owner's insurance.

Chairman Cain closed the public hearing.

There was discussion on how there may be a need for other funding sources and having development and the normal planning process provide bikeways but it should not be tied to the bicycle plan herein.

Mr. Balmer moved to recommend to the City Council to adopt the bike plan as written. Mr. Suess seconded the motion which passed by a vote of 10 to 0 with the following votes being cast on roll call: Mr. Scritchlow-yes; Mr. Pearson-yes; Mr. Cain-yes; Mr. Balmer-yes; Mr. Protzman-yes; Mr. Wills-yes; Mr. Stanczak-yes; Mr. Diamond-yes; Mr. Cornell-yes; Mr. Suess-yes.

OLD BUSINESS: Discussion of Comprehensive Plan

Ms. Pinnamaraju stated we are being very conscious of all of the effort put into creating other plans like the Bicycle Master Plan, and will incorporate those plans into the comprehensive plan. She stated we are presenting goals and objectives and for the first four working groups which are around neighborhoods. She reviewed some of the existing conditions pertaining to housing, crime rates, schools, the work force, homelessness, and characteristics of the neighborhoods.

Richard Heiser, 810 W Jefferson, and Matt Burgess, Home Sweet Home Ministries, 303 E Oakland representing the Neighborhood Identity Group discussed their findings and goals. They explained neighborhood identity is a core component of the comprehensive plan as almost all responses from the community input touched on neighborhoods in some fashion. Although each neighborhood is unique in some way the most successful neighborhoods are destination neighborhoods. The group believes the older and historic neighborhoods will be the most desirable neighborhoods. Goals focus on the livability of the neighborhoods. The most urgent needs and more intense efforts should be in the regeneration area. Redevelopment needs to protect the historic character. Improving the identity and appearance is important as well as the communication between the City and the neighborhoods.

Jeremy Hayes, 1904 Withers Lane and Dennis Arnold 504 N. Lee, represented the Housing Group. Mr. They explained there is an overlap from their group with the other groups. The guiding theme is to have housing affordable and accessible with a range of choices. Their recommendations are tailored to unique areas. A goal is to ensure the availability of safe, attractive and high quality housing to meet the needs of all current and future residents. Another goal is to ensure reinvestment in the established older neighborhoods and compact development of the city.

Holly Cox, 13 Palm Ct. and Andrew Blumhardt, 1306 Broad Creek, represented the Education Group. The education vision will continue to be a pillar of the community, enriching our culture and economic competitiveness. The city or the school districts continually have to react and so coordination is important. Thus a goal is for the city to coordinate with the school districts to maintain high quality educational opportunities equitably for all students within the city. A second goal is to provide life-long skills and learning opportunities for all by investing in excellent schools, colleges and continuous education.

Greg Shaw, 1104 N. Roosevelt and Karen Zangerle, 3 Clinton Place in Normal, represented the Community Well-Being Group. They are aiming for a more livable place to live and work. They

emphasized how the public input had spoken loud and clear to the neighborhood diversity, welcoming and sense of community. No Bloomington comprehensive plan has tried to directly embrace the human needs that they have worked on. Their goals are to end the homelessness, develop a coordinated and efficient system of services that addresses people and community needs, and for food security. They want to encourage a zoning ordinance to allow services where the needs are located. There needs to a system of continuity of care. There are obstacles that stand between hungry people and food but the zoning should not be one of them as with food pantries.

Ms. Pinnamaraju acknowledged the work of the compassionate members of the working groups.

There was discussion on creating or improving the identity of the neighborhoods, other aspects to community wellness such as aging, and homelessness. Mr. Burgess explained there is a need to not just have more shelters or more housing but have a more effective strategy of addressing the causes that contribute to homelessness.

Chairman Cain thanked all of the working group members for all of their time and said their work will be very helpful when we get to the final stages of the plan.

NEW BUSINESS: None

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come to the Bloomington Planning Commission's attention, Mr. Balmer moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Wills supported the motion which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Woolard, City Planner

For further information contact:

Mr. Woolard, City Planner

Department of Planning and Code Enforcement

Government Center, 115 E. Washington Street, Bloomington, IL 61701

Phone: (309) 434-2341 Fax: (309) 434-2857

E-mail: mwoolard@cityblm.org