

**City of Columbus  
Regular Planning Commission Joint Meeting  
April 16, 2014**

The April 16, 2014 regular meeting of the Planning Commission for the City of Columbus was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Garth Sternberg at the City Hall. Present were Commission members Mark Daly, Pam Wolowski, Jesse Preiner, Jody Krebs, and Barbara Hvass; joint with City Council Members Bill Krebs, Jeff Duraine, Jessie Messina, Denny Peterson and Mayor Dave Povolny; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, Planner Dean Johnson, and Recording Secretary Karen Boland.

Also in attendance were Michael Darger and Joshua Hill with University of Minnesota Extension; Business Retention & Expansion Task Force members Lee Weight and Rhonda Sivarajah, Anoka County Commissioner; Perry Wagamon, Frank Wagamon, Myron Organ, Steve Wagamon, and Pat Preiner.

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

*Motion* by Commissioner Krebs to approve the Agenda as presented. Second by Wolowski. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL – 5107 190<sup>TH</sup> LANE NE VARIANCE APPLICATION PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES OF APRIL 2, 2014**

*Motion* by Commissioner Krebs to approve the minutes from the 5107 190<sup>th</sup> Lane NE Variance Application Public Hearing held on April 2, 2014 as written. Second by Preiner. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL – ORDINANCE HOUSEKEEPING AMENDMENT PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES OF APRIL 2, 2014**

*Motion* by Hvass to approve the minutes from the Ordinance Housekeeping Amendment Public Hearing held on April 2, 2014 as written. Second by Commissioner Krebs. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL - REGULAR PC MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 2, 2014**

*Motion* by Hvass to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2014 regular Planning Commission meeting as written. Second by Commissioner Krebs. Motion carried.

**COLUMBUS BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BR&E) PROJECT DISCUSSION**

Mursko introduced Michael Darger and Josh Hill of the University of Minnesota Extension. They conducted the BR&E focus groups and condensed the data gathered during the project.

Mr. Darger, Center for Community Vitality, University of Minnesota Extension; and Mr. Hill Graduate Research Assistant at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, gave a presentation on the BR&E data. Participants in the focus groups represented 21 of the City's 102 businesses. About 75% of participants were with commercially-zoned industrial businesses. The other 25% were home-based businesses. The strengths and limitations of focus group research were briefly discussed. Between October and December 2013, four focus groups met. Each group had 6-7 participants. Results for each group were summarized. Each session was also recorded and

transcribed. Everything transcribed was entered into data analysis software and themes were identified.

Specific quotes and overall themes were discussed.

Based on the research data, seven potential directions were identified for Columbus to consider:

- 1) Clarifying a zoning plan for Lake Drive;
- 2) Creating a plan for the Hwy. 96/I-35 interchange and making it known to businesses;
- 3) Creating a checklist of things businesses need to do with differing jurisdictions (e.g. watersheds, EPA, etc.);
- 4) Cooperating with neighboring cities to work on economic development;
- 5) Preparing shovel-ready land parcels;
- 6) Create a community identity campaign; and
- 7) Appointing an officer or committee to give the business perspective on civic affairs.

Mursko and Johnson recommend PC and CC members come up with an action plan that is two-fold: short-term and long-term goals, figuring in costs and what the City can afford now, and, potentially, in the future. Johnson discussed a possible work plan using several recommendations of the focus group research data. These ideas were discussed, and PC and CC members agreed to look at the following actions in response to the BR&E data:

- Reevaluate land use concepts and zoning categories on Lake Drive.
  - Appoint a business liaison on the EDA as a conduit for business ideas to a formal City body.
  - Consider additional staffing for business marketing, recruiting, and retention; and evaluate additional marketing efforts for business retention and expansion.
  - Create a Columbus community identity plan.
  - Examine Tax Increment Financing and other development incentives for Lake Drive and the Freeway Corridor.
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- Continue a ColumBiz event in some format that would minimize costs and maximize business involvement.
  - Continue to work with MN DOT, and other involved agencies, to complete the I-35 design and replacement of the CSAH 23/TH 97 interchange in Columbus.
  - Expand and update the existing development checklist to assist existing and new businesses in procedures involving zoning and permitting with the City, County, watersheds, federal agencies, and the Met Council.
  - Update and maintain a list of all Columbus businesses, contacts, and services provided, for marketing and distribution to all businesses, and posting on the City website.
  - Work with landowners and realtors to maintain a single source, up-to-date listing of commercial and industrial properties available in Columbus.

Johnson and Mursko will create an action plan from this discussion and incorporating suggestions to seek a master developer, and to coordinate strategies in the update of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mursko said there will be one more meeting with the BR&E task force to give them feedback, and then a final report will be generated. PC and CC members would like to have another joint meeting to look at the action plan in more detail, with timelines, and looking at monetary realities. The PC's next regular meeting on May 7, 2014 at 7 p.m. will again be a joint meeting with the CC.

#### **PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

There was no topic raised for discussion for Open Forum.

#### **CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Mursko asked everyone present to take a look at the City website prior to the next meeting, and look for three things they would like to see there. Ms. Sivarajah said site selectors often start with a City's website. She suggested a specific heading on the website for businesses, with any pertinent information for businesses considering the area.

#### **PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS' REPORT**

Nothing to report.

#### **ATTENDANCE - NEXT CC MEETING**

Preiner is scheduled to attend the City Council meeting on April 23, 2014.

*Motion* by Commissioner Krebs to adjourn. Second by Sternberg. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Karen Boland, Recording Secretary