

**City of Columbus**  
**Regular Planning Commission Joint Meeting**  
**April 15, 2015**

The April 15, 2015 regular meeting of the Planning Commission for the City of Columbus was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chair Garth Sternberg at the City Hall. Present were Commission members: Pam Wolowski, Jesse Preiner, Jody Krebs, and Jim Watson; joint with City Council Members Bill Krebs, Jeff Duraine, Mark Daly, Denny Peterson and Mayor Dave Povolny; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, Planner Dean Johnson, and Recording Secretary Karen Boland.

Also in attendance were Perry Wagamon, Frank Wagamon, Steve Wagamon, Myron Organ, Sherri and Roger Nase, Mary Preiner, Pat Preiner, and Ryan Garcia and Sandy Rummel of the Metropolitan Council.

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

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

**APPROVAL - REGULAR PC MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 1, 2015**

*Motion* by Commissioner Krebs to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2015 regular Planning Commission meeting as written. Second by Wolowski. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL – 9218 LAKE DRIVE IUP APPLICATION PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES OF APRIL 1, 2015**

*Motion* by Preiner to approve the minutes from the 9218 Lake Drive IUP Application Public Hearing held on April 1, 2015 as written. Second by Commissioner Krebs. Motion carried.

**DISCUSSION -- PLANNING COMMISSION/CITY COUNCIL & METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**

Metropolitan Council Intro/Overview

Ryan Garcia, sector representative for Districts 11 and 12, and Sandy Rummel, Council Member for District 11 attended at the City's request to discuss plans, hopes, and areas of question/concern for the community. Of the communities they represent, Columbus is the first to ask them to come in for this type of face-to-face discussion.

An overview of the Metropolitan Council was presented by Garcia. The Met Council was established in the late 1960s as a regional policy-making body, planning agency, and a provider of core services --especially in the form of infrastructure and the systems of regional wastewater, regional transit, and regional parks—throughout the seven-county metro area. The Met Council tries to be collaborative while balancing the needs of 186 communities divided into 16 districts, and extending over seven counties. The main policy plans the Met Council is required by State statute to prepare and adopt are:

- The Regional Development Guide – called THRIVE, it is a big-picture framework of goals and policy steps.

- A Water Resource management Policy Plan, which deals with wastewater, surface water management, and water supply.
- A Transportation Policy Plan, including highways, transit, and aviation.
- A Regional Parks and Trails Plan.
- A Housing Policy Plan.

From these plans, system statements with facts and data unique to the local level, are put together to help each community in developing their Comprehensive Plan. These system statements will be on-line this cycle. Local Comprehensive Plans are statutorily required documents that must be updated every 10 years. They address issues of land use, transportation, water resources, and housing. Two new areas to be addressed in a community's plan, which are not statutorily required, are economic competitiveness, and resiliency or sustainability. The hope is that a community's Comp Plan will be a guiding document.

Each community is assigned a designation by the Met Council. Columbus' sewer area is identified as an Emerging Suburban Edge designation. The key points for this designation are that it has a mix of residential, business, rural and agricultural. These areas are poised to continue to grow and can be served by the metro sewer system. For this designation, the plan is for forecasted growth at a density of at least 3-5 dwelling units/acre. The remainder of the City is identified as Diversified Rural. The key points for this designation are that it has high quality natural resources. Premature development for expansion of urban services is to be avoided. Extension of those services creates a great regional expense and strain, so that must be done in an orderly, efficient and cost-effective manner. There can be flexibility in how that urban service area is defined. For this designation, the plan for growth is not to exceed the 2040 forecast, and in patterns that don't exceed 4 units per 40 acres.

In the THRIVE regional guide, the Council tried to use the best available data and science to forecast population and household growth. The Mayor asked how accurate the Met Council population and household forecasts were during the last cycle, and how these estimates are reached. Rummel said that the estimates give a framework for if development occurs. It is the best estimate based on the information they have. During the last cycle, no one could have foreseen the Great Recession and the impact that it had.

Water resource policy was discussed. The Mayor listed the number of agencies that are involved in water policy, and questioned all the overlap of regulation and data gathering. Rummel expressed that these various agencies have different areas of expertise and concerns about water use. She said that some of the best research on water being done in the United States is being done in the metro area.

Fiscal disparity was discussed with relation to the way in which Met Council policies affect a community's fiscal disparity numbers. All fiscal disparity is normalized to population, so the density restrictions imposed by the Met Council affect the City's ability to increase population.

### Housing Density

The City's unique development challenges were presented and discussed. A Land Use Map, showing the very limited amount of upland in the community, was reviewed. Approximately 22-

25% of City land is buildable. Since the Met Council classifies the City as Diverse Rural, even with an exception due to wetlands, it results in the City having a five-acre minimum lot size to maintain our overall density restriction. Every new wetland rule really hampers the City's ability to develop. Sternberg pointed out that, with the extensive amount of wetlands, Columbus has 2224.8 acres of vacant upland. Under the current Comp Plan, with five-acre minimums, a maximum of 444 new homes could be built, and that is only if the wetland on individual parcels allows for required setbacks and supports placement of a home.

Another concern is the ability to bring in sewer and water. Columbus is not allowed to bring this in from the south, but cannot afford to build these systems.

Comp Plan amendment was discussed and re-zoning and overlays, but the Comp Plan dictates the City's density requirements. Any amendment will be looked at with relation to regional plan consistency.

Commissioner Krebs asked if the City can design or modify its classification during the system statements part of the process. Garcia said no, that there is very little chance of creating a new, modified classification. Mursko expressed the opinion that it would be much more proactive and cost effective to make changes to the system statements, rather than to go back and amend after Comp Plans are completed. Garcia said the opportunity to look at those kinds of changes would have been during the creation of the Council's Policy Plans.

Rummel and Garcia suggested a workshop to meet with the people closer to policy development and designations for individual communities. This would also include people better able to explain the way the forecasts are established. It would help to look at where there might be room for flexibility. They said their goal is to help the City be as successful as they can be to get what they want for their community. Garcia asked the City to submit a list of key issues with as much specificity as possible, in advance of another meeting. Rummel said this meeting will help them dig deeper with more sensitivities to Columbus' situation.

### Bridge Project

Mursko gave an overview of the I-35/Hwy. 97 Bridge project that is before the legislature. The Met Council designates funds for all sorts of transportation projects. Every two years they do regional solicitation for transportation projects. It is a very competitive grant program. The next cycle will accept applications sometime in 2016. Mursko said that, historically, this funding has gone to Hennepin and Ramsey counties. Since Columbus is in the metro transit taxing district, we feel we should have more say in services than communities that don't contribute. Garcia acknowledged that the majority of transportation dollars go to the more populated areas. Having a project already in line and having funding leverage always helps in the consideration of a grant application.

CC member Daly asked if the Met Council does resolutions of support in situations like this bridge legislation. He mentioned the other entities that have already passed such resolutions for this project. Rummel said that she can do this individually, but she will also bring it to the Met Council Chair and the Council's legislative liaison for any support they can offer.

Sternberg thanked Garcia and Rummel for their attendance on behalf of the PC and CC.

**PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

There was no topic raised for discussion for Open Forum.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

There will be applications at both May PC meetings. One is for a plat; the other is from RAHP for a zoning amendment and a CUP amendment to allow for additional uses.

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS' REPORT**

**KREBS COMMENT:**

Commissioner Krebs visited the State Capitol when our bridge bill was heard in committee before Transportation Committee Chair Dibble. Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah, State Senator Michelle Benson, and City Administrator Mursko testified before the committee. Krebs said she noticed with some other projects, there was more of an emphasis on matched dollars or designated funds. She feels that more information on that should be sent to the committee regarding our project.

Mursko added that this was an informational hearing by a sub-committee of the committee. They heard 22 bills which will be ranked in order of funding priority. The City has not yet received a ranking.

*Motion* by Commissioner Krebs to adjourn. Second by Sternberg. Motion carried.  
Meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Karen Boland, Recording Secretary