

**CITY OF COLUMBUS
JOINT CITY COUNCIL & PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY MEETING FORMAT
STATUTES SECTION 13D.021
05-04-2022**

The 05-04-2022 Regular Planning Commission meeting for the City of Columbus was called to order at 6:04pm by Mayor Jesse Preiner at the City Hall. Present were City Council members Sue Wagamon, Janet Hegland arrived at 6:21pm, Rob Busch and Commission members Kris King, Barb Bobick, Bob Berens and Chair Ron Hanegraaf, City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, Public Work's Director Jim Windingstad and Permit Coordinator Carissa Kranz.

In attendance via interactive technology was City Council member Shelly Logren and Forest Lake Times Representative Natalie Ryder.

Also, in attendance in person were Residents Myron and Cindy Angel and Equipment Transport Representatives Dawn Beutel and Derek Mann

The meeting was held in an interactive technology meeting format.

1. CALL TO ORDER – REGULAR MEETING – 6:04PM

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. MOTION – APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA *Motion* Wagamon to approve agenda as written. Second Berens. Motion carried with King, Wagamon, Hanegraaf, Berens, Busch, Bobick, Logren and Preiner voting in favor.

4. MOTION – APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 16,2022, JOINT MEETING MINUTES *Motion* Bobick to approve 02-16-2022, Joint City Council and Planning Commission Minutes as written. Second Hanegraaf. Motion carried with King, Wagamon, Hanegraaf, Berens, Busch, Bobick, Logren and Preiner voting in favor.

5. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION – EQUIPMENT TRANSPORT, INC. NON-BINDING CONCEPT REVIEW

Representatives from Equipment Transport, Inc., Dawn Beutel and Derek Mann (5830 240th St, Forest Lake, MN 55025) gave a presentation outlining their business and concept plan at a proposed location in Waldoch Addition (lots 6 & 7).

Equipment Transport, Inc. was established in 2006 and currently conducts their business out of the City of Wyoming. At the time of this non-binding concept review, they have a little over 30 employees. Equipment Transport, Inc. is a contractor shop/office business, providing contract transportation services to other contractor companies. In the City of Columbus alone they currently work with 6 regional businesses. Equipment Transport, Inc. is proposing to move their business to the City of Columbus's Commercial/Industrial district, and locate their office, service center, and outdoor equipment storage on two recently created lots (6 & 7) in the Waldoch Addition plat.

Planning Commissioners and City Council members were able to share their thoughts and ask questions.

Staff Question for Planning Commission and City Council Consideration:

1. Regardless of the Property location, is the proposed use consistent with purpose statement and character for the C/I district, as described in the staff report?

- King answered yes and stated that it is consistent with the other businesses in the area.
- Wagamon presented the following statement and information regarding her stance on this concept plan: "I wanted to give a little bit of background on the Waldoch subdivision property that some of the council and planning members may not be aware of. This background is going to support my view on the concept plan. (Handout - Columbus zoning map, 2012 & 2016).

When the residents that currently live on the western border of the Waldoch subdivision, along Zodiac Street, bought their property, the Waldoch property was zoned residential on that western side. The full parcel was split with approximately 1/3 of the parcel along Lake Drive zoned commercial and the other 2/3 to the west, along Zodiac Street, zoned residential.

About 10 years ago the Planning Commission and City Council, at the request of the Waldoch's, attempted to rezone the 2/3 that was residential zoned property on the west side of the property to commercial, to make the full parcel 100% commercial, with the intent to allow a business to move in directly across the street from the residents on Zodiac. At that time, it did not pass. However, in 2015 it was addressed again, and it was determined that 3/4 of the property would be zoned commercial and the other 1/4 of the property along Zodiac would stay residential. However, at the last minute it was reduced again to only zone 10 acres of the full 80 acres to residential. So, part of the adjacent property, along Zodiac, is zoned residential and part of it is zoned commercial which is shown in the map from 2016. One of the residents that border the commercial property runs a small horse business with the horse pasture bordering the now zoned commercial property.

Although the business being discussed tonight would not directly border the residential property, in my view, the type of businesses that are appropriate for the commercial property close to the residential area should not be heavy equipment or construction businesses.

I'm going to read the ordinance to support my point, 7A-740 for the C/I district defines the areas is, "to encourage the establishment of areas for general commerce and business, retail sales, wholesale sales, and light manufacturing. Activities would include retail outlets, eating and drinking establishments, and manufacturing activities commonly located in and serving the local market. The overall character of the district is intended to be transitional in nature, thus industrial uses allowed in this district shall be limited to those which compatibly exist adjacent to the commercial and lower density (in this case residential) activities.

I believe there are businesses that do fit in this area, like Blake Drilling and Street Smart. They have little impact on the adjoining properties and fit the overall character of the area and are transitional in nature. I don't believe that a business that includes 20 semi-trucks, 6 dump trucks, and 50 construction and lowboy trailers fit the description and the character we are trying to preserve in our city. But just as important, I believe we need to protect the current residents on Zodiac and adjoining property to the north, on 141st, that bought their property with the intention that the adjoining property was residential. I believe it's the responsibility of the planning commission and council to rectify the unfortunate change in zoning by a previous council and not allow industrial businesses that would have a negative impact on the bordering residents." Wagamon

answered that she presented her written statement that she read aloud and opinion already. Wagamon also stated that the City Council and the Planning Commission discussed another concept plan previously and she thought the direction was not to encourage large trucks so she doesn't know why they would allow them now and not in other places. Wagamon stated that she believes Equipment Transport would have minimal impact and because it doesn't go all the way back to the residential property, she thinks it's reasonable, even though in her opinion she didn't believe that was the direction the Council and Planning Commission wanted to go in.

- Hanegraaf answered yes and stated that it is consistent with the other businesses in the area.
- Hegland answered yes and stated that it is consistent with the other businesses in the area.
- Berens answered yes and stated that it is consistent with the other businesses in the area.
- Busch answered that he's hesitant but open to it and that this business seems to be consistent with the other businesses in the area.
- Bobick answered yes and stated that it seems to fit and voiced concern about the number of trucks going down the road and wishes there was some way to regulate traffic on that road.
- Logren echoed Wagamon's concerns and stated she didn't believe this was the direction the Council was going in and did not want to be a truck central. She stated that yes, this particular business may fit in this district but recommends the Council to look at attracting other businesses and not necessarily bring in more trucks. Logren did indicate that she was encouraged that their trucks will be driving mainly through the business district vs residential.
- Preiner stated that he agrees with Wagamon and Logren. He's encouraged that they are proposing minimal vehicle traffic, he still has concerns about impacting the residents, but he stated that he cannot say that it wouldn't be a good fit.

Equipment Transport, Inc representatives will connect with Mursko to discuss the next steps in applying and processing an official request.

6. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION – CITY STAFFING ORGANIZATIONAL CHART, SHORT AND LONG TERM PLANS FOR PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT, AND LEVEL OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE OVERALL

The Personnel Committee gave a presentation on Immediate Priorities and Long-Term Priorities for City staffing and focused on the Immediate Priorities of the Associate Planner and Senior Accountant vacancies.

Hegland gave an overview of the posting process and the lack of applications received for the Senior Accountant position. Recommendation from Personnel Committee for Council to contract for the position of Senior Accountant for a year and to try to get an applicant by word of mouth instead of keeping a job posting live that has not been getting attention. Mursko stated she has reached out to CLA's two divisions for government financing (Fund Accounting) to get quotes on short/long term contracts. Currently the City is contracting with CLA on a short-term basis and the contract was extended to the end of May 2022. The City has used CLA for the past five years to assist with large/complex entries.

Motion Hegland to direct staff to proceed with obtaining a contract for a one (1) year cycle for a Senior Accountant to fulfill tasks such as establish written policies/procedures that will ensure consistent and transferable knowledge going forward and establish checks and balances also to include a clause that the firm would assist in training of next employee or contractor and that the City would be able to opt out early if the right candidate did come along and for staff to bring the contract back to Council for approval as soon as possible. Second Wagamon. Motion carried with Wagamon, Hegland, Busch, Logren and Preiner voting in favor.

Hegland gave an overview on the differences between the job descriptions of the Planning Tech and Associate Planner and explained that when Gutknecht was promoted to Associate Planner, he kept all the Planning Tech duties, gained the additional duties under the Associate Planner job description and the workload was too great for one person to fully complete everything assigned to them. The Associate Planner position has already been approved and the job posting has been live for roughly a week. Mursko has been reaching out to prior applicants, interns and other City Administrators to see if anyone knows of someone that would be a good fit for this position. The Personnel Committee met with Gutknecht for an exit interview and determined it would be beneficial for the future Associate Planner position to have another Planning Tech/Assistant Planner position that would be able to assist them. Recommendation from the Personnel Committee for Council to allow Mursko to investigate bringing in a Graduate School Planning Intern to perform some Associate Planner duties over the summer at roughly \$20.00 per hour with a budget under \$5,000.00, to post a job opening notice for a Planning Tech/Assistant Planner position and to continue to utilize expertise from City Planner Dean Johnson during the transition and after hire for complex developments.

Motion Hegland to direct Mursko to investigate bringing in a Graduate School Planning Intern to take on some of the associate planner responsibilities over the summer at roughly \$20.00 per hour with no benefits for approximately 60 days. Second Preiner. Motion carried with Wagamon, Hegland, Busch, Logren and Preiner voting in favor.

Motion to approve adding a Planning Tech or Assistant Planner Position to the City's payroll and to direct staff to post and interview for that position. Second Wagamon.

Prior to the roll call vote Logren commented that she wanted to see a chart of the positions the City currently has, how much the City is paying for those positions and the job description/duties of each position. Logren stated it was difficult for her to make a decision on hiring another person at this time without more information. Hegland explained that Mursko had created a presentation with a lot of the information Logren is looking for and the Personnel Committee decided to show Hegland's presentation first, then schedule another meeting to show Mursko's presentation and have an in-depth discussion at that meeting about the details of hiring additional staff. Mursko shared the draft Columbus Organizational Chart she created with the proposed Planning and Zoning Tech position listed under the Associate Planner.

Busch asked for clarification on what positions the Personnel Committee were recommending on hiring. Hegland reiterated that Council already approved posting for an Associate Planner, if they were able to find a Graduate School Planning Intern, they would be able to start quickly and would be a temporary summer employee and that they are asking for an addition of a Planning Tech/Assistant Planner position. Busch also asked about the posting of public notices being listed under the Associate Planner job description and why it wouldn't be the responsibility of the Public Communications Coordinator. Hegland explained that those notices are the legal publications in the newspaper that are required when having a public hearing. Logren asked if Kranz could take over

that duty and Mursko responded that yes, Kranz was capable but does not have the time to take on additional duties. Mursko further explained the process of posting notices and why it fits better under that Associate Planner's job duties.

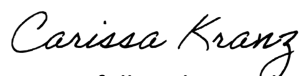
Mursko gave an overview of the draft Organization Chart and the current staffing structure with Mayor and City Council at the top, City Administrator, Accountant, Assistant to City Administrator, Deputy Clerk and Public Communications Coordinator are under Administrator noting that the Accountant position is technically vacant and the Assistant to the City Administrator is out on FMLA, the Public Works & Parks department has 4 in-house positions including Public Works Director, Public Works Maintenance and contracted Parks Workers through RVS and then the Building, Planning and Zoning department is made up of an Associate Planner and Building Permit Coordinator. Mursko summarized that with the proposed Planning Tech position there would be a total of 12 employees, 4 of which are Public Works.

Once the discussion concluded the *Motion* was carried by roll call vote of Wagamon, Hegland and Preiner voting in favor and Busch and Logren voting against.

Hegland stated that at an upcoming Council meeting they will focus on background information, where we were/how we got here, reviewing the current organizational chart, where the predicted growth and revenue streams will be, consequences of understaffing and defining what the desired work product/service levels they want to provide to the residents, builders and developers. Hegland stated that if the Council wants to improve communications, update ordinances, to do more with compliances and that all of these things require people. If the Council is serious about what they want to see moving forward they need to figure out how many more people they need, what skill level they need and if they don't want to pay for those people then Council must have realistic expectations about what the current staff can get done. Hegland stated the Planning Commission members are welcome to attend the next meeting, but it would not be a requirement. Hegland asked Busch and Logren prior to the next meeting to give her a better idea of the information they need so that they feel comfortable proceeding with the Personnel Committee's recommendation. Mursko will review the meeting calendar and schedule the next meeting to continue the discussion in the coming weeks.

7. **PUBLIC OPEN FORUM** Noting at this time.
8. **PLANNING COMMISSION AND COUNCIL MEMBERS' REPORT** Nothing at this time.
9. **ATTENDANCE FOR UPCOMING MEETINGS** Bobick is scheduled to attend the 05-11-2022 City Council meeting to present on the Equipment Transport Inc. non-binding concept plan.

MOTION TO ADJOURN *Motion* by Preiner to adjourn, seconded by Hanegraaf. Motion carried with King, Wagamon, Hanegraaf, Berens, Busch, Bobick, Logren and Preiner voting in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:03pm.



Respectfully Submitted: Carissa Kranz, Recording Secretary