

City of Columbus
Regular Planning Commission Meeting
February 1, 2017

The February 1, 2017 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: James Watson, Pam Wolowski, Jesse Preiner, and Jody Krebs; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, Planner Dean Johnson, and Recording Secretary Karen Boland.

Also in attendance were City Council members Bill Krebs and Mayor Dave Povolny; and Mary Preiner and Pat Preiner.

AGENDA APPROVAL

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

APPROVAL – WOODLAND DEVELOPMENT CUP FOR PUD REQUEST PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES OF JANUARY 18, 2017

Motion by Wolowski to approve the minutes from the Woodland Development CUP for PUD request Public Hearing held on January 18, 2017 as written. Second by Krebs. Votes as follows: Krebs – aye, Preiner – abstain, Wolowski – aye, Watson – aye, Sternberg – aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL – PREINER PRESERVE PRELIMINARY PLAT REQUEST PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES OF JANUARY 18, 2017

Motion by Watson to approve the minutes from the Preiner Preserve preliminary plat request Public Hearing held on January 18, 2017 as written. Second by Wolowski. Votes as follows: Krebs – aye, Preiner – abstain, Wolowski – aye, Watson – aye, Sternberg – aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL – REGULAR PC MEETING MINUTES ON JANUARY 18, 2017

Motion by Krebs to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2017 regular Planning Commission meeting as written. Second by Sternberg. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION – 2018 COLUMBUS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN KICK-OFF

➤ Planner Johnson gave a brief history of the Metropolitan Council. In 1976 the MN legislature passed the Metropolitan Land Planning Act. It extended the authority to a new organization, which had previously been known as the Metropolitan Sewer Board. It required that this new regional agency, The Metropolitan Council, create a regional plan, and upon completion of that, all cities, townships, counties, school districts were required to meet certain requirements. For the communities and the counties it became this Comprehensive Plan. In 1992 or 1993 the legislature decided this plan should be revisited every 10 years.

Columbus' last Comp Plan was completed in November 2009. In 2012 the Met Council started doing estimates for growth throughout the region. They sent preliminary numbers to the City with instructions that if there was reason to object to or refute those numbers, there was a period of a few months to let them know. The Met Council was suggesting the 2040 forecast for population in Columbus would be 4300. Columbus was already at 3800. The assumption by the Met Council was that there would be no new growth. The City made an argument for an increase in estimates for population and households. The City pointed out that in the 2009 Comp Plan 500 new homes

were forecast in the freeway district alone. This was based on what was already planned within the freeway corridor in the sewer district. The City also assumed at least 11 rural homes/year. Based on the letter, the Met Council increased its forecast by about 1200 people and almost 300 households. They reduced the number of jobs, but that doesn't affect how the City does planning nor does it relate to sewer capacity or other issues.

➤ The City has until December 2018 to finish the next Comp Plan. Per state law, the Plan will have to be sent to all abutting communities, who then have six weeks to comment. Most communities respond more quickly than that unless there is some hot-button topic. None is anticipated. Our target is to complete the Plan by June 2018. By law, a comment period must also be allowed for school district, and watersheds (we have three). Johnson said in the three previous Plans he's been involved in there were no consequences for being late. Mursko reported that the City is receiving a grant of \$10,000 to offset preparation costs. Usually half of that money is received up front and the other half upon completion.

By law, the Metropolitan Council has jurisdiction over:

- transportation,
- sewers – this has been expanded to mean water resources,
- parks, and
- airports

The Council also acts as housing advocates. While not part of their official capacity, they give all communities an expectation for optimal amount of affordable housing units.

➤ Last year City staff began to look into changing the City's classification from rural diversified to rural residential. In looking at a detailed map of uplands, it is clear there is a finite amount of buildable land left, and with a five-acre average, only a limited number of new households could be added.

The Met Council has not expanded the rural residential category in 20 years. Ham Lake is the nearest neighboring community identified as rural residential. Oak Grove also asked for and received that designation. There is no checklist or blueprint for what constitutes rural residential status, and the Council does not have a process for requesting that type of change. The City does have a letter from our Council rep confirming that the City should make its case, and, after the Comp Plan is completed, the Council will determine whether or not to change the designation.

Johnson passed out the Existing Land-Use Map currently in the Met Council database for the City. There are a number of errors. He asked PC members to go through that map, first individually and then collectively, to identify errors and make corrections.

Johnson feels Columbus can establish, in its Plan, why it is not a holding zone for urban development. The Council identifies urban areas as having a minimum of three homes per acre on the sewer system. Holding zones (which include our current rural diversified designation) go to one home per 10 acres. Agricultural zones have one home per forty acres. Those are the Council's three primary land-use categories. Rural residential is a non-conforming category that doesn't meet any of these. Our Plan must make the case for it. Our inability to expand sewer is a key argument for that case. The tremendous cost based on density in Columbus precludes us from adding sewer and water anywhere in the foreseeable future. On the north and west the City is bordered by state-owned property (Carlos Avery), which is also wetland. On the other two sides are Forest Lake and Lino Lakes. Both have Metropolitan Council connectivity, but for all intents and purposes the regional investment ends in those cities. Columbus is boxed in on all four sides as far as sewer.

This inability to add sewer is a good argument for transition to rural residential. Columbus is a wet community with isolated pockets of upland that are undeveloped and without reasonable expectation of sewer connection potential.

➤ In rural residential areas the City has to consider creating another rural residential standard—something with different lot sizes and higher density—and then the burden becomes determining where that will apply. On the Land-Use Map there would still be one rural residential category, but on the City Zoning Map there could be two rural residential zoning districts. Then the City won't be constantly having to change the Comp Plan to recognize that. Part of the category change from rural diversified to rural residential is that you want the flexibility to make the decision on any parcel where that increased density would go.

Johnson emphasized there will be winners and losers in a process where you establish where a higher density goes. That is very hard and will create problems, no matter how it falls out. These policy decisions must be made on a variety of factors. How City officials decide where any increased density goes is a big issue.

Some policy decisions pertaining to rural residential densities include:

- Will we have one large district? Will we create two new zoning districts, and call it one land-use district? What density are we looking at? Who gets it and who doesn't? Is it across the board?
- How do we set it up? Where is the new development potential going to be? Do you identify areas or drop to a 2 ½-acre lot size?

There was discussion about the fact that 2 ½ - 5-acre lot sizes don't pay for themselves in terms of cost of services vs. tax revenue generated. There must be substantial improved value on a property for it to pay for itself. The ultimate decision to warrant consideration for rural residential designation is because of factors that preclude anyone from having a cost-effective ability for urban services. We are boxed in. We are 67-68% wetlands. We have 11,000 acres of state-owned land.

➤ Lisa Barajas, the Local Planning Assistance Manager, will work with our new sector representative Corrin Hoegen Wendell. Hoegen Wendell has been with the Met Council for a little over a month. Barajas has not gone through a Comp Plan process either. Johnson said he and Mursko have worked with Barajas and she is reasonable.

➤ Johnson is working with the firm of Bolton and Menk on this. The primary planner he'll work with is Haila Maize. She has worked with the City of Minneapolis for 16 years, and worked in South Carolina prior to that. She will be working with two or three other planners on this, and City officials will have the chance to work with her and determine if she seems like a good fit going forward.

The consultant's main tasks will be writing the Plan updates for review and editing by the PC, updating maps, and creating strategy for supporting a change in designation to rural residential.

➤ Johnson will work with the PC to focus on the policy questions.

In summary, the focal points should be:

- updating the Existing Land-Use Map
- determining retail, commercial, and light industrial areas in the freeway corridor and other potential locations (e.g. along Lake Drive)
- determining whether to create a suburban residential district in the freeway corridor

- determining how to approach density in the rural residential districts

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There was no topic raised for discussion for Open Forum.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mursko said there are two applications for the next PC meeting (2/15). One is a variance for Woodland Homes to allow partial metes and bounds plats. The other is for an IUP for a residential-zoned business on West Broadway. That property had a CUP by the previous owner, but that is no longer in effect as the current business is completely different.

The City Council has called for the March 1st PC meeting to be a joint meeting for further discussion about the proposed changes to the accessory building ordinance. There may also be some discussion about primary policy issues that will need to be addressed in preparing the 2018 Comp Plan.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS' REPORT

WATSON COMMENT:

Watson reported that, as the City Administrator said, the City Council would like to further discuss whether or not to allow accessory buildings made of vinyl, plastic or fabric, and whether multi-modal shipping containers or portable on-demand storage containers (PODS) may be used as accessory buildings.

ATTENDANCE - NEXT CC MEETING

Krebs is scheduled to attend the City Council meeting on February 8, 2017.

Motion by Krebs to adjourn. Second by Preiner. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Karen Boland, Recording Secretary