

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
May 8, 2014**

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Diane Clemens (Chairwoman); Andrew Boutin, Nick Meyer, Aaron Martin, Amber Thibeault, John Alden. (David Nistico was absent.)
- ADMINISTRATION:** Robin Pierce, Development Director.
- OTHERS PRESENT:** Regina Mahoney, George Tyler, Elaine Sopchak, Peter Sloan, Sue Hale, Elizabeth Skinner, John Glasserman.
- AGENDA:**
1. Call to Order
 2. Audience for Visitors
 3. Additions/Amendments to the Agenda
 4. Work Session: Comprehensive Plan
 5. Other Planning Commission Items
 6. Adjournment
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1. CALL TO ORDER

Diane Clemens called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

2. AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

George Tyler commented as follows:

- The Trustees have received communications lately and been made aware of comments on Front Porch Forum regarding the downtown planning initiative and the update of the village plan. There appears to be confusion between the two.
- The Trustees understand people are unhappy with the proposal for the bank property and the process.
- Some points of clarification:
 - State government does not empower municipalities to declare a moratorium on development.
 - Municipalities can regulate development and must function according to state law.
 - The Trustees appoint members of the Planning Commission.
 - The Planning Commission is charged with applying the Land Development Code to development proposals.
 - Planning commissioners as appointed members are removed from the political process and provide a consistent, uniform approach to determining whether a development proposal conforms to the Land Development Code.
 - Meetings by the Planning Commission are transparent per state law and open to the public. The public can provide comment at the meetings.
 - The Planning Commission takes public input under consideration.
 - The public cannot fundamentally change a development application that fundamentally complies with the Land Development Code. Modifications to the development can be made.

- Regarding allowing a six story building in the village, the state felt that to stop sprawl density must increase in developed areas. Though it cannot be proven that this stops sprawl and suburban development continues, it is believed sprawl is slowed by increasing density in an area. Other benefits of increasing density include maximizing the efficiency of municipal services, improving economic vitality, and decreasing commuting distances to work, school, and shopping when people live in the downtown area. Climate change is another reason.
- The village comprehensive plan covers the entire village and includes a vision statement and statement of values for education, open space, recreation, land use, energy use in the village. The public has input along with state and regional entities.
- The downtown planning effort by the Trustees is to draft a specific plan to show what the community wants to see in the village based on the Land Development Code and property constraints. Developers will know the vision and have the “nuts and bolts” of the Land Development Code to build what the village wants. The public along with key stakeholders will be invited to the planning initiative and it is hoped there is a positive effort going forward.

3. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

None.

4. WORK SESSION: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Land Use

Typographical errors and spellings need correction in the section.

Section 9.4.3 – Planned Commercial Development

A woman in the audience asked about waivers and how the general public would be informed about waivers for a development proposal before the Planning Commission without attending every review meeting. Robin Pierce explained the Land Development Code outlines options for waivers for certain enhancements to a development proposal. The applicant may request waivers when the proposal is submitted. Sometimes the village makes a requirement on a proposal that triggers a waiver request, such as moving the building back from the road edge a certain distance in exchange for narrowing the width of parking spaces. Individuals can send an email to planning staff with comments and questions and the correspondence will be included in the meeting packets provided to the Planning Commission.

Section 9.4.7 – Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

- Add “and/or park-and-ride facility” after “public shared parking”.
- Note in the text that the TOD district is multimodal.
- Add an objective about future upgrade of the train station (have the sentence read “pursue appropriate upgrades....”).
- Make a clear distinction between PUD and PRD in the text. Strengthen and clarify sentences such as “....encourage use of innovative residential design techniques”.

Section 9.4.11 – Village Center

- Add language saying the village is to move traffic while creating safe pedestrian movements, vibrant commercial and residential opportunities, and appropriate parks and green spaces.
- Rather than list uses, group them (i.e. professional offices with associated retail uses could be one group). The Land Development Code has a list of permitted uses. The comprehensive plan includes a short list of uses.

Section 9.4.13 – Light Industrial

- Add “encourage master planning....”

Section 9.4.14 – Highway

- Correct the date of November 31 to November 30.

Section 9.4.17 – Planned Agricultural

- Add language about solar farming and sustainable agricultural activities under the range of potential uses.

Chapter 6 – Implementation

- The chapter explains all the goals and objectives in the plan and who does what, when, and the funding source.
- There was discussion of making the chapter more concise.
- Formatting needs to be the same throughout the document.
- The abbreviations need to be defined. Regina Mahoney will include definitions on each page.
- Language is needed to encouraging thinking strategically about village owned assets and how to benefit the greatest majority of people. Explanation is needed of what the Land Acquisition Fund is for (to purchase property), how the fund will be used, and that the village should take action as appropriate. The text needs to be tied to the village center. Rather than listing fund balances the text should direct the reader to where current fund balances can be found (i.e. annual budget). Sources of funding should be noted (grant, community foundations, tax credits, and such). There should be a statement saying the grant fund amount is as of 2014. Regina Mahoney will rewrite the section.

List of five priorities of focus for the next five years (separate page)

- The goal relative to managing the village budget should make reference to village improvements that relate back to the Land Acquisition Fund and other funding sources. Also note that the goal is to enhance and ensure the continuation of village life.
- The statement of historic preservation and four structures of historic value to the community needs further research and better reference. This could be set as a goal for the future.
- There should be mention of participating in the village center vision planning exercise.

- The bike/walk committee should be mentioned.
- The crescent connector, pedestrian walkway on Main Street, and a future alternate connection to Route 15 should be mentioned.

There was discussion of the traffic models for Five Corners and the crescent connector. There is a link on the village website to the Regional Planning website where the traffic models are posted.

5. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

Next meeting:

- June 15, 2014

Agenda:

- Maps
- Natural Resources
- Chapters 1-4.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Aaron Martin, SECOND by Andrew Boutin, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 PM.

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