

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: March 10, 2022

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Zoom Webinar

MEMBERS ATTENDING

VIA ZOOM: Jane Billman, Andrew Fell, Lew Hopkins, Debarah McFarland, Karen Simms, Chenxi Yu

MEMBER ATTENDING AT CITY BUILDING: Dustin Allred

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jonah Weisskopf

STAFF PRESENT: UPTV Camera Operator; Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner | Zoning Administrator; Marcus Ricci, Planner II

PUBLIC PRESENT: None

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Allred called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll call was taken, and there was a quorum of the members present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the February 10, 2021 regular Plan Commission meeting were presented for approval. Ms. Billman moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Mr. Hopkins seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Allred	-	Yes	Ms. Billman	-	Yes
Mr. Fell	-	Yes	Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes
Ms. McFarland	-	Yes	Ms. Simms	-	Yes
Ms. Yu	-	Yes			

The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2425-T-21 – A request by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to amend the Urbana Zoning Ordinance with changes to Article II (Definitions), Article V (Use Regulations), and Article VI (Development Regulations), and other relevant sections, to facilitate solar energy system installation.

Chair Allred continued this case to the April 7, 2022 regular meeting at the request of City staff.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2438-T-22 – An application by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to amend the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to allow for limited, residential, commercial and public uses in existing buildings located in the R-7 (University Residential) Zoning District.

Chair Allred opened this case and continued to the March 24, 2022 regular meeting of the Plan Commission. Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner | Zoning Administrator, explained that staff requested the continuance to be allowed time to hold one additional neighborhood meeting before bringing the case to the Plan Commission.

Plan Case No. 2442-T-22 – An application by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to amend the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to require applicants for Planned Unit Developments to hold a neighborhood meeting prior to consideration at Plan Commission.

Chair Allred opened Plan Case No. 2442-T-22. Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner | Zoning Administrator presented the staff report for the case. He began by explaining the purpose of the request which is to codify a practice that the Planning staff has been encouraging for a few years. Planned Unit Development (PUD) cases are more complex cases and staff have been encouraging applicants to hold neighborhood meetings prior to the case going before the Plan Commission. This is less formal and allows for more of a discussion between the applicant(s) and the residents in the neighborhood. It has proven to be very effective leading to better outcomes, to shorter Plan Commission and City Council meetings, and to better projects overall. He reviewed the proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance. He read the options of the Plan Commission.

Chair Allred asked if the Plan Commission members had any questions for City staff.

Ms. Billman asked Mr. Garcia to provide a history of the type of projects that have held neighborhood meetings and the type of projects that did not. Mr. Garcia replied that neighborhood meetings have been held for other types of cases as well. Mr. Fell noted that a neighborhood

meeting was held for 408 Green Street. Mr. Garcia stated that even though it was not a PUD case, he felt it was helpful to hold the neighborhood meeting. He mentioned instances where neighborhood meetings were held ... one for a PUD case for redevelopment of a sorority house at 1404 South Lincoln Avenue, and the second was for a five and a half story development along Lincoln Avenue, which was withdrawn by the applicant prior to the case going to Plan Commission.

Mr. Fell stated that he had been on both sides of this issue. He highly encouraged neighborhood meetings; however, he was hesitant about requiring the applicant to do something that they do not already do. He asked, is it possible to have the informal neighborhood meeting as the first step in the process rather than as an additional process? He asked who would be organizing the meeting and sending out notifications because it is difficult for an applicant to get mailing information for neighboring property owners. Mr. Garcia replied that City staff would supply the address information for the surrounding property owners. For public hearings, City staff is required to notify property owners within 250 feet of a subject property. If an applicant wants to go beyond this range, City staff will provide the additional addresses as well. City staff also sends emails to neighborhood list-serves.

Mr. Garcia stated that he believes it is better for the applicant to decide how the meeting would be set up. City staff will work with them and assist them in the process. Mr. Fell noted that this may be difficult for an applicant who lives out-of-town. He added that the Plan Commission already hears complaints about residents not being notified or informed of potential developments where developers are trying to force their projects. He felt that the City staff should prepare and send out the notification and have the applicant pay for it. Mr. Garcia stated that they could make the language less nebulous.

Mr. Garcia addressed the concept of including a neighborhood meeting as step one of the process. He stated that City staff did not want to add steps to make the process longer. Time is money when it comes to development.

Ms. Simms wondered what City staff's relation would be to the neighborhood meeting. How would City staff know what happened at the meeting? Mr. Garcia explained that City staff would be at the meeting. He did not feel that this needed to be added to the proposed text amendment language, though.

Mr. Allred asked if the proposed text amendment should be more specific about what is done at the meeting. Some applicants may just put up some renderings, and some may give a presentation. Mr. Garcia has left this up to the applicant in the past. He said it is their project and their responsibility to present the project to the neighborhood and get feedback from the neighbors in attendance. Ms. Simms stated that some minimum expectations could be good to standardize the process.

Chair Allred noted that there was no public in attendance to comment on the case, so he declared the public input portion closed and opened the hearing for Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Ms. Billman asked if we should require a minimum number of expectations for neighborhood presentations. Mr. Allred stated that unless they come up with precise wording, the Plan Commission should delay voting on this case at this meeting.

Mr. Fell stated that if they do impose specific requirements, one of them should be about any waivers being requested and the reason for the PUD. He stated that it okay to have a minimum number of requirements; however, it is difficult to have specific conditions on how a presentation should be because that might not be the best way to present a project.

Mr. Hopkins agreed that the Plan Commission should send this back for staff to work on the wording to include requirements for the presentation and to specify that staff attend the neighborhood meeting; otherwise a neighborhood meeting could be held before City staff is even made aware of the project. He also stated that the notification process needs to be more specific and involve City staff as well. He stated that he did not believe they needed to include any requirements for the presentation other than about the waivers they are asking for.

Mr. Allred stated that he felt they should consider the expectations that the public has about neighborhood meetings. Ms. Simms stated that she would like to have this information because they should address what the public's need is. She wondered if there should be a requirement that the presentation show the equity impact on the neighborhood to ensure that they work on meeting the City's broader goals.

Mr. Allred stated that the two big aspects of a PUD for him are: 1) what is the relief (waivers) that the applicant is asking for? and 2) what is the benefit the PUD would provide to the community? He felt that the City should require an applicant to articulate these two during their presentation at a neighborhood meeting.

Mr. Hopkins talked about the language for notifications. He stated that footnotes are problematic in that one hardly ever sees them. Requiring an applicant to work with City staff on the notification process puts the City staff in charge of it. It addresses Mr. Fell's concern and simplifies the language in the Ordinance.

Mr. Hopkins asked if the language in the proposed text amendment for Final PUD Review was the same as for Preliminary PUD notifications. Mr. Garcia said that to avoid redundancy in the Ordinance, he added "*A neighborhood meeting shall be required if the conditions of Section XIII-H.1.b above are met.*" under Final Planned Unit Development Review. He stated that it could be tweaked to make the language clearer on what the conditions are. Chair Allred suggested rewording it to say "***...if the proximity conditions of Section XIII-H.1.b above are met.***" Mr. Hopkins agreed that it would be less lawyerly that way. This is crucial because as currently worded, it could be interpreted that if an applicant met the conditions for the preliminary review neighborhood meeting, then they did not have to hold a neighborhood meeting for the final review. He said Mr. Allred's suggested language change fixes this.

Mr. Hopkins moved that the Plan Commission continue Case No. 2442-T-22 to the next Plan Commission meeting to allow City staff to revise the language as suggested. Ms. Billman seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Ms. McFarland	-	Yes	Ms. Simms	-	Yes
Ms. Yu	-	Yes	Mr. Allred	-	Yes
Ms. Billman	-	Yes	Mr. Fell	-	Yes
Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes			

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Fell asked if they should add language as to who pays the cost of the meeting place. Mr. Garcia stated that they usually find a location that is free and open to the public. He suggested that the language says that the applicant must work with City staff to identify a location for the neighborhood meeting. Mr. Allred suggested that the language simply say, ***“The applicant shall work with Planning staff.”*** Mr. Garcia agreed.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

Future Meetings – Mr. Garcia stated that boards and commission would likely resume meeting in person beginning in April. This means that a board/commission member would only be allowed to remotely attend a meeting if the member has a personal illness or disability, is away for employment, or has a family or other emergency.

Mr. Hopkins inquired about the outcome of the Champaign County text amendment regarding beekeeping requirements. Mr. Garcia explained that while the Plan Commission was reviewing it at their previous meeting, one of the Champaign County boards denied the case.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. CLOSED SESSION

To Consider Security Procedures, Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(8)

Chair Allred announced that this item on the agenda was continued to the next in-person meeting of the Plan Commission.

13. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Garcia, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission