

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING**

**URBANA PLAN COMMISSION**

**APPROVED**

**DATE:** September 23, 2021

**TIME:** 7:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Zoom Webinar

**MEMBERS ATTENDING VIA ZOOM:** Andrew Fell, Lew Hopkins, Debarah McFarland, Chenxi Yu

**MEMBER ATTENDING AT CITY BUILDING:** Dustin Allred

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jane Billman, Karen Simms, Jonah Weisskopf

**STAFF PRESENT:** UPTV Camera Operator; Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner; Lily Wilcock, Planner II; Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development

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

Chair Allred called the meeting to order at 7:04 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 September 9, 2021 regular Plan Commission meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Fell moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Mr. Hopkins seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Ms. McFarland	-	Yes	Ms. Yu	-	Yes
Mr. Allred	-	Yes	Mr. Fell	-	Yes
Mr. Hopkins	-	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 October 7, 2021 regular meeting at the request of City staff.

**6. OLD BUSINESS**

There was none.

**7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were none.

**8. NEW BUSINESS**

There was none.

**9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

There was none.

**10. STAFF REPORT**

There was none.

**11. STUDY SESSION**

**Review of the Draft 2005 Comprehensive Plan Assessment**

Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development, and Lily Wilcock, Planner II, gave an update on “Imagine Urbana”. They began by speaking on the following key points:

- *Imagine Urbana* By the Numbers
- Input by the Numbers

Chair Allred asked if staff had noticed an increase in the number of survey responses after the events and postcard mailing. Ms. Wilcock replied yes. The postcard mailing brought in quite a few surveys. It is harder to track with the bookmarks. At the Labor Day and Light the Night events, there were a couple of people who filled out the survey on the spot. Staff also received quite a few texting surveys as well after the four larger events – Light the Night, Bike to Work Day, Labor Day and the Farmer’s

Market. Most of the conversations were centered on *What is the Comprehensive Plan?* and *Who is the City of Urbana?*

Chair Allred asked Ms. Wilcock to explain some of the resources to find answers to those questions. Ms. Wilcock stated that on [www.imagineurbana.com](http://www.imagineurbana.com), there is an about page with videos that explain what the Comprehensive Plan is. Ms. Ruedi added that there is also an Idea Wall and an Urbana Places map where you can “pin” places in Urbana that you would like to have improved. The survey is available in four languages on this website as well.

Ms. Wilcock continued with the update by talking about the following:

- UIUC Urbana Planning 510 Class – Fall 2021
  - Community Engagement Focus
  - Autonomous Mapping Tool Project
- 2005 Comprehensive Plan Assessment
  - Changes that have been made
  - Why did we review the 2005 plan?
  - How was the 2005 plan reviewed?
  - Lessons Learned
    - Neighborhood/Corridor Level Lens
    - Integration of City-wide issues with Land Use and Transportation
    - Actions Taken versus What We Prioritized
    - Equity Integration
    - Time Spent Planning
  - Input Process and Amendments
  - Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan
  - Goals and Objectives
  - Timeline of Accomplishments
  - Implementation Strategies
  - Next Steps
- Examine Urbana
  - What is the Comprehensive Plan?
  - Upcoming Reports

Mr. Hopkins stated he read to the end of Appendix B. He believes that he was the only one left [on Plan Commission or staff] that worked on the 2005 Comprehensive Plan process. The assessment was in depth and complete, and he did not want to spend much time on editing or modifying it. Mr. Hopkins wanted to spend more time going into a lot of detail about some of the specifics while substantively, methodologically, and representationally of what was learned.

The first thing Mr. Hopkins talked about was substance. Which things got done? Which things did not get done? Why? He said to please remember that in 2005, the University of Illinois was going to completely redevelop Orchard Downs into a private new development. Menards was going to develop a new store and huge subdivision.

Second, Mr. Hopkins noted that the language used to write the Comprehensive Plan in 2005 was badly chosen and very confusing. One of the uses of *Goals* is to write staff reports for Plan Commission meetings to help justify the zoning decisions. *Goals* have to be worded a specific way

and have to be long term and stable. They also have to have backing from a legal justification point of view. However, you cannot tell which *Goals* are for this purpose and which ones are for target or goal posts. The listing of Goals, Objectives and Strategies in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan were very confusing, and the current Assessment Report makes that very clear.

The third thing Mr. Hopkins talked about was the user engagement process, and he encouraged engaging the plan users in the process. As he previously mentioned, he said the Plan Commission uses some of the *Goals*. The Public Works Department uses the *Mobility Map* for their arterial street projects. Other agencies use some of the *Goals, Objectives* and *Strategies*, so City staff needs to be clear to identify the users and engage them in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan.

A fourth thing Mr. Hopkins talked about was the potential opportunity, and also a real potential danger, about the way we imagine the scope of the Comprehensive Plan. One of the ways to think of Urbana's planning is as a collection of planning activities and plans that are made to be updated more frequently than the Comprehensive Plan, which takes five years to create or update. By the time the 2005 Comprehensive Plan was created, it was out-of-date. We need to make sure that we are not pretending that plans like the Council's annual action plan is part of the Comprehensive Plan, which must also serve justification legally for land use decisions, because the annual action plan has to be a one year, every year plan with the current Council members and Mayor. However, we have to think clearly how the two are linked.

Mr. Hopkins stated that the *Implementation Strategies* include "to do" lists, which are actions that can be completed. *Goals* cannot be completed; they can only be reached. In the *Implementation Strategies* table, there are actions assigned to the City Council. Those actions are reviewed every year in the Council action plan. We need to think of the Comprehensive Plan as an interacting live phenomenon. One piece that typically takes three to five years to do and has a twenty year cycle among many other things that happen on a one year cycle.

Mr. Hopkins also mentioned the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). His understanding is that it is done on a three year cycle. Some of the projects in the CIP are also mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan's *Strategies*, which is a problem because the three year cycle and the projects mentioned in the *Strategies* have to be real from the point of view of the CIP. Either they are related or the City is wasting their time spending three years creating a Comprehensive Plan that also pretends to be a CIP.

Mr. Hopkins said that another example of this is the question of neighborhood detail versus community-wide detail. We have to be careful with this as well. If we are trying to be community-wide and not deal with neighborhood details, then we have a problem because that will lead to vagueness. If we create city-wide criteria for land use policies, then we can set those up, but if we do anything at a level of detail that most neighborhoods care about, then we either have to say that we will do neighborhood plans that will be linked to the Comprehensive Plan process or we are going to somehow deal with levels of detail specific to neighborhoods in the Comprehensive Plan process as well.

Mr. Hopkins went on to say that the Plan Commission uses the Comprehensive Plan in a particular way. Much of what the Plan Commission does is review zoning decisions, annexation decisions, subdivision review, special use permits, and planned unit developments. We should not think of something that is identified with the Plan Commission as being a plan for all of the City of Urbana's

activities. He suggested that they separate the idea of *Imagine Urbana* from the idea of the Comprehensive Plan because the baggage of a Comprehensive Plan and the aspirations of *Imagine Urbana* are in conflict. He felt it was a great opportunity to think of a way of talking about Urbana planning at large as being an ongoing process with many plan-making elements at different time intervals and different time horizons, etc. Looking at the Assessment Report reinforced his view on this significantly.

Ms. McFarland thanked Mr. Hopkins for putting it in elementary terms because she said it makes sense now. His explanation helped her a lot. She was thinking that the two plans worked together but in fact, they do not. She appreciated the way Mr. Hopkins broke it out.

Chair Allred asked how the Assessment Report was going to be made to the public. He wondered if there was a way to pull some of the information out of the report and display it on the *Imagine Urbana* website to not only see what was not accomplished but also see what was accomplished since 2005. Ms. Wilcock agreed that pdfs are not something that really encourages or invites people to read them. She explained that *Examine Urbana* would have a story and cascading website for breaking down the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, the assessment, the lessons learned and what we are working towards. Mr. Hopkins suggested posting the Executive Summary and making it more difficult to find the rest of the report, including a list of appendices by providing a link to the rest of the report. Ms. Ruedi liked this suggestion.

Chair Allred asked to have some of the graphics posted as well. Mr. Hopkins said that he would be leery of using bar graph graphics that link goals, actions and percentages accomplished. The large aggravate results are really artifacts of a whole bunch of things that is not very informative.

Chair Allred did not recall there being a specific strategy in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan to do neighborhood planning city-wide. There were certain neighborhoods called out as needing a plan or study. There was a strategy that had to do with building capacity for neighborhood planning. Some comprehensive plans are a collection of neighborhood plans. Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner, clarified that they intend to treat all neighborhoods with the same level of detail across Urbana. It will be higher up than the level of a neighborhood plan, not just a community-level where everything applies all over. The reason being that neighborhoods are different and require different needs. The City of Memphis, who has an award-winning Comprehensive Plan, identified different types of neighborhoods in their plan, and treat each type differently.

Ms. Wilcock said that the neighborhoods that the 2005 Comprehensive Plan said the City was going to do detailed plans for were not the neighborhoods that the City actually made plans for. This says a lot about the adoption and the strategic level of the Comprehensive Plan. City staff would like to take another look and do a better job of neighborhood planning [once the new plan is adopted].

Ms. Wilcock stated that all neighborhoods have said that there are things that they would like to see improved upon and some are specific to their areas. Neighborhood planning could be used as a tool to help resolve some of the conflicts but also build relationships and bridges in those areas that the City of Urbana and the Comprehensive Plan community-wide higher level thinking could benefit from particularly at the decision-making level. Mr. Garcia added that after the City adopts the new Comprehensive Plan, then it might be time for City staff to tackle some neighborhood plans.

Mr. Garcia went on to say that there is a conscious effort to write the Comprehensive Plan so that everyone will be able to understand it, not just planners. Chair Allred added that there is a challenge with doing this and still making it a resource that the Plan Commission can use to evaluate whether a rezoning or PUD meets the criteria. Mr. Hopkins gave an example of using a “to do list” rather than “goals” or “agenda” or “action list”. A “to do list” will allow you to schedule them or mark them off when completed. Trying to schedule criteria or spending a lot of effort linking your to-do-list to your criterion, it may be more important to think “when I do an action, does it fit my criterion?” rather than thinking “for this criterion, what is the way of implementing it?” It is like looking at it in reverse.

Chair Allred asked what the gathering of input would go into. Ms. Wilcock stated that the delivery of that information would go into a story map and the content would be incorporated into a vision statement. From the visioning process, they would narrow it into themes, which will be used for focus groups and discussion groups later in the process.

## **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 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Kevin Garcia, Secretary  
Urbana Plan Commission