

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING**

**URBANA PLAN COMMISSION**

**APPROVED**

**DATE:** December 10, 2020

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

**PLACE:** Zoom Webinar

**MEMBERS ATTENDING REMOTELY:** Dustin Allred, Jane Billman, Andrew Fell, Lew Hopkins, Chenxi Yu

**MEMBER ATTENDING AT CITY BUILDING:** Tyler Fitch

**MEMBER ABSENT:** Jonah Weisskopf

**STAFF PRESENT:** City of Urbana (Host); Jason Liggett, UPTV Manager, Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner; Lily Wilcock, Planner I; Andrea Ruedi

**OTHERS ATTENDING REMOTELY:** There were none.

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

Chair Fitch called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call was taken, and there was a quorum present.

**2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

There were none.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the November 5, 2020 regular Plan Commission meeting and the November 24, 2020 special Plan Commission meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Hopkins moved that the Plan Commission approve both sets of minutes as written. Mr. Fell seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Ms. Yu	-	Yes	Mr. Allred	-	Yes
Ms. Billman	-	Yes	Mr. Fell	-	Yes
Mr. Fitch	-	Yes	Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes

The minutes were approved by unanimous vote as written.

**4. COMMUNICATIONS**

There were none.

**5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were none.

**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**

Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner, talked about the following:

- Plan Case Nos. 2411-PUD-20 and 2412-PUD-20 was reviewed by the Committee of the Whole on Monday, December 7, 2020. The Committee of the Whole chose to forward both cases to the City Council with no recommendation until after the Design Review Board hears the related case.

Ms. Billman inquired when the related case would be considered by the Design Review Board. Mr. Garcia explained that staff is waiting on the Design Review Application to be submitted by the applicant before scheduling a meeting in early January.

- Lily Wilcock, Planner I, passed the exam and is now a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, which is a professional accreditation for planners.

The Plan Commission congratulated Ms. Wilcock on her accomplishment.

**11. STUDY SESSION**

**Comprehensive Plan Update**

Chair Fitch opened this item on the agenda. Mr. Garcia stated that while the current plan has many great elements – goals and objectives for economic development, the environment, parks

and open space, etc., it is becoming outdated in other ways. Different things and events happened that has necessitated City staff to create a new Comprehensive Plan to guide our efforts for the near future. The goal for the new plan is to be truly comprehensive, to tie together many different elements, and to be more equitable by getting the voices and input of the citizens. Due to the importance of the Comprehensive Plan as a tool that guides the City's future policies and decisions, the City has allocated resources for two full-time staff members. He introduced Andrea Ruedi and Lily Wilcock. He stated that Ms. Ruedi and Ms. Wilcock would be giving the presentation and asking for feedback from the Plan Commission.

Ms. Ruedi and Ms. Wilcock began by sharing a screen presentation on Zoom and talking about the following:

- Imagine URBANA
- What is a Comprehensive Plan?
  - Include arts & culture
- What is the Comp Plan process?
  - Extensive community engagement
- “Imagine Urbana” Branding
- Planning Framework and Engagement Tools
  - Allocate staff resources
  - Form staff working group to steer process
  - Form staff data group to gather & interpret data
    - Storytelling
  - Ongoing information videos
  - Evaluate texting survey tools
  - Develop website
  - Give everyone a voice by reaching out to potential community partners
- The List Keeps Growing!
  - Student intern will be helping reach the youth population
  - Urban Planning Department class led by Dr. Allred. The class will focus on increasing equitable participation, engagement and participation in the Comprehensive Plan process.
- Get to Know Your Community's Services Providers
- “Imagine Urbana” Community Engagement Timeline
- “Imagine Urbana” Website
  - Idea wall
  - Short survey
  - Interactive map
  - Informative videos
  - Quick polls/webinars
- “Imagine Urbana” Comprehensive Plan Contacts

Mr. Allred asked about the timing. Public engagement will start in January and go through June. Would there be some amount of background information/explanation of not only what the Comprehensive Plan is in a traditional sense but also what City staff imagines the Comprehensive Plan is in the more comprehensive sense that integrates a lot of separate elements in a bigger holistic vision? Ms. Ruedi answered yes. They did not go through that information with the Plan Commission because the Commission members already know what the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is. Information will be provided via the website...on the front page there is

a tab that says, “About Imagine Urbana”. There is a text version of the information about what City staff envisions, and there is also a video featuring Lemond Peppers, Outreach Coordinator for the City of Urbana. The first six months is really the first phase of community engagement. Community engagement will be done throughout the project. Every time they change something in the plan, they will go back to the community and get more feedback. Ms. Wilcock added that Mr. Peppers explains the breakdown of why the Comprehensive Plan is important to the City of Urbana as well as explain why the residents should participate and provide input. The first engagement process will be compiled into a participation report that they hope staff craft a vision and some themes moving forward for the Comprehensive Plan. Then, they plan to work with focus groups to re-evaluate and dip in deeper to get residents thoughts and opinions on more specific topics.

Mr. Allred stated that the Plan Commission hears many thoughts and comments from the public that represent perceptions of what they think is going on. Sometimes, it would be useful to have a baseline of background conditions so people understand what the housing needs are in the neighborhoods, etc. So, it might be useful to have some baseline information available initially to some groups so they have good information to base decisions and comments on. Ms. Wilcock stated that they would be partnering with resources in the community to provide an educational component. Staff was also planning to have guest speakers to talk about topics that the residents are interested in learning more about the City of Urbana. One topic could be housing. Ms. Ruedi added that they want to have a panel of experts provide accurate information to educate residents and address any misconceptions they have; however, they first need to find out what people are thinking and what areas need more education.

Ms. Ruedi stated that they want to be able to provide brief updates throughout the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan to the Plan Commission. It could be 5 to 10 meetings during some meetings or in the form of a report, whichever the Plan Commission members prefer. This would allow the Plan Commission to give additional feedback to staff.

Mr. Hopkins stated that the development of the participation process seemed to be highly developed and adapted to COVID. He went on to talk about three concerns.

First, Mr. Hopkins talked about the notion of a truly Comprehensive Plan. He said we need to be careful about this concept. Each of the agencies in which you have a video also has a planning process, and most of them actually have plans. Those plans are almost never on the same cycle or in the same form as the City’s plan.

He stated that the current City of Urbana Comprehensive Plan had been amended six to ten times. Like the Constitution, when the City amends the Comprehensive Plan, we don’t rewrite it...we add to it. That means when we write a new comprehensive plan, we have to decide if we are rewriting the Bicycle Plan, the Climate Action Plan, the Downtown District Plan, the North Broadway Plan, the Philo Road Plan, or the input to the last Long Range Transportation Plan or the Transportation Plan. So, the notion that we are going to get all over this together in one fantastic process would not be true. The process has to be open for a planning system. One of the things that ought to happen early in the data process is getting together what constitutes the current Comprehensive Plan. There is a lot of substance, and much of it has legal standing. One strategy to deal with this is to create an advisory group with a representative from some of the other plans. For example, the Bicycle Plan is a City adopted amendment to the Comprehensive Plan was created and advocated by a bunch of people who are really interested in bicycling. The

rest of the City did not participate in the plan. The content of the Bicycle Plan is not going to attract people to watch videos or anything else. Somehow, we need to say that we are not replacing the Bicycle Plan. We have looked at it, and we know that what we are creating links to the Bicycle Plan, and either we are going to adopt the new Comprehensive Plan as an amendment to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan or we are going to adopt a new Comprehensive Plan and choose which other plans either are incorporated from the beginning or are amendments to it that we choose to adopt. Mr. Hopkins stated that another reason it could not be a truly comprehensive plan is because it would not incorporate the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP is another City document created by the Public Works Department, which they will continue to do and on a different schedule.

Secondly, Mr. Hopkins stated that when we hold meetings with people in public both as a commission and in the process of creating a plan, what attracts interest in the community is the ability to react to ideas that matter to people. If you want to get people to come to a meeting, then propose a building on Lincoln Avenue. If you want to reach people within the mile and one half jurisdiction, then propose an extension of Olympian Drive. If you want to get people in Southeast Urbana, then talk about development with High Cross Road. Talking in the abstract about goals and themes does not attract interest because people are actually attracted to what the City is talking about doing. We have to think about how to create substance early enough in the process to engage people. One way to create substance is to look at the current plan. If there is a reason to change something in the current plan, then one of the ways to discover that is if someone thinks there is. He stated that he felt there needed to be some ideas about how to put substance out in front of people.

Lastly, Mr. Hopkins talked about the representation of the City of Urbana. Going out and inviting people to participate by a group of people acting as the City who are not like the claimed thing we are trying to do, then it is not going to happen. He suggested that they assign people value and status by asking them to serve on a body that is going to engage the substance of what is going on. If you do this, then you can get them to engage in a certain way. You can choose them to be representatives. By asking them to serve on a task force, you are recognizing the substance of what the person may be able to offer.

Ms. Wilcock stated that Mr. Hopkins comments were great, and she addressed some of his points. They have been talking about what has been amended and what does need to be replaced in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. They have made plans with the Sustainability Advisory Commission to update the Climate Action Plan with the new Comprehensive Plan. They plan to look at additional integrations with other plans; however, she did not believe that the Bicycle Plan would be on the list. Ms. Ruedi added that Scott Tess, the City's Environmental Sustainability Manager, told her that he did not want to have a separate process for updating the Sustainability Plan. So, they feel that one of the themes that comes out of their community engagement would be on the issues that the Sustainability Plan addresses. Then, they will start educating people with different information on the data that they have. They want to have interaction with people in the community, not just them providing feedback. They want the people in the community to be involved in the process and participate as much as they want to. Mr. Hopkins stated that it was important to ask individuals to participate in order to get them to do it.

Ms. Wilcock agreed that there needs to be substance to attract people. She stated that there are certain things that the community is currently asking of City staff, which City staff and City Council are making sure to address. One thing is equity. Mr. Hopkins explained what he meant

by substance. He said that while we have been talking about equity for his entire life, the idea of a theme is not what he wants to talk about. He wants to talk about police practices, single-family zoning, neighborhoods, etc. Equity in the abstract is not an issue, so at some point if they talk about equity, then they need to talk about some substantive, actionable regulation or zoning pattern or investment. Until we get to that, it does not meet his standard for a committee.

Mr. Allred agreed with Mr. Hopkins, especially Point #2. Using the kind of analysis that we will have done in terms of understanding background conditions to raise some of these critical issues that could be general issues or issues specific to particular places as a way to get people involved and have a stake in the engagement process. It is a good way to get people to not only give us their opinion but to also help work through what they are passionate about.

Mr. Hopkins thanked Mr. Allred for having a workshop with his students in the upcoming spring and following fall. He noted that the 2005 Comprehensive Plan was done with the help of a workshop of grad students who created a lot of the deliberate substance to work on.

Chair Fitch commented that one of the things in the current 2005 Comprehensive Plan that he finds least useful when evaluating specific proposals are the goals. One could fit about any project into the current goals somehow. He found the future land use content more helpful. When you tell people what you want to do in a neighborhood, the people will start caring a lot. You tell them in the abstract, and it becomes less tangible.

Chair Fitch stated that he agreed with the idea of having a task force. Even though the Plan Commission would serve as an advisory board with updating the Comprehensive Plan, there needs to be a broader participation.

As for bringing together the custodians of the amendatory plans, Chair Fitch mentioned that there had been some luck in the past with having joint sessions with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and also with the Sustainability Advisory Commission. So, he felt that holding joint sessions with the boards/commissions/committees of plans that City staff wanted to incorporate into the new Comprehensive Plan may be helpful.

Ms. Wilcock talked about the prospective Vision Zero Plan. It is a statement of working towards zero deaths for people riding bicycles, people walking and people driving vehicles. It is about engineering safe streets. So, she felt that it would be important to have a joint session for this.

Chair Fitch stated that he would be interested in the City working with the University of Illinois, because the University is growing in terms of students and footprint. He would also like to see some context about the radical different approaches to development and growth that the City of Urbana and the City of Champaign have.

Mr. Hopkins noted that one of the zoning districts has no height limit with a minimal Floor Area Ratio. He referred to the project at the southeast corner of Lincoln and University Avenues. The only reason the City was able to limit the size of the project was due to the developer needing approval of a Special Use Permit or a Planned Unit Development. When reviewing the project, the Plan Commission realized that the City either needed to change the height limit to work for that zoning category or to create a new category that works for the locations in which we currently have the existing category.

Mr. Garcia stated that he believed that they would get more into these types of details as the process goes along. He appreciated the Plan Commission input for the new Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Fitch added that he would also like to see how successful things have been with some of the items in the existing Comprehensive Plan, such as design review for the Lincoln-Busey Corridor, the Mixed Office Residential zoning and the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood area as well as whether the sharrows and dedicated bicycle lanes increased bicycle ridership. He volunteered to help gather data for the new Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Wilcock thanked the Plan Commission. She stated that one of the benefits of updating the Comprehensive Plan in-house is that there are many talented, hard-working experts in many fields that can participate in the process. Ms. Ruedi stated that this meeting was very helpful to them and thanked the Plan Commission for their comments.

## **12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Kevin Garcia, Secretary  
Urbana Plan Commission