

**LOWELL PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
MARCH 13, 2014**

President Kelley called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Recording Secretary Dianna Cade called the roll. Members answering the roll call were Richard Kelley, James Konradi, Eli Carras, Craig Earley, Robert Philpot, and Donald Parker. Matt Felder was not in attendance. Also present were Councilman Phillip Kuiper, Building Official Tom Trulley, Department of Public Works Director Greg Shook, and Planning Consultant Jim Mandon,

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Konradi made a motion to approve the February 13, 2014 regular meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Philpot and carried with six ayes.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Mandon addressed the Board and stated that he was there to present the thoroughfare draft to the Commission and answer questions on the plan. Mr. Mandon explained the different maps that they would be reviewing and their intended use. He explained the purpose of the thoroughfare plan, stating that it is meant to examine how the current transportation system is functioning, develop a plan of action to address current transportation issues that may be happening now, and propose developmental guidelines which will avoid future negative transportation issues. The plan will look at existing streets that may be near or at capacity, and it will also propose improvements to increase the capacity of these roadways. Based on existing and future land uses that we have seen from previous studies; the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinances, we can plan for how land should be used in the future and recommend street extensions and improvements. Public funded future improvements can be planned for, funded, and built before they are needed. Most of the projects that are identified in this plan are privately funded and will require developers to install improvements in the roadways that match the overall transportation plan. It is an advantage to look at the overall traffic system instead of subdivision by subdivision because it reduces the likely-hood of the Town making small compromises, and traffic efficiency will be viewed in a vacuum. He explained the truncated roadways and numerous T intersections that we have and that in many cases the T intersections are in close proximity to each other. He stated the plan will assist the Plan Commission in determining the appropriate road pattern to give to the developers at an early stage. There will be no negotiating with developers, they will have to follow the plan if they want to develop the land.

Mr. Mandon began to explain the various impediments to the transportation improvements. He stated that railroads are the biggest impediment. Because they are reluctant to relocate their crossings due to how costly it is. Railroads are open to approving a new at-grade crossing if an older one can be closed. If an at-grade railroad crossing is being underutilized, it is to their benefit to move it and the Town can trade crossings with the railroad. The second largest impediment is wet lands and waters. Cedar Creek truncates the town in half paralleling the CSX railroad. Mr. Mandon used a

map to demonstrate the wet lands, waters, and forest/shrub areas. Mr. Mandon stated the next impediment is soil conditions. He used a soil map to demonstrate where the different types of soil are in Town and what percentage they represent to the make-up of the Town. He then discussed the different types of soils and the capital expense on making improvements to the roadways where these soils are. Mr. Mandon stated the next impediment is power lines. In our case the power lines are North of Town and they run East/West. There is no prohibition on building roadways under power lines, so these are usually less of an obstacle. Mr. Mandon stated that topography is another significant impediment when building roadways. He used another map to demonstrate the topographic composition of the Town. He explained the topo lines on the map and what they meant.

Mr. Mandon continued on by discussing what issues we have with our current transportation system. He referred to the first map which outlines some of Lowell's current transportation weaknesses. He stated that Lowell's current transportation system is forty seven miles, with three hundred fourteen intersections. One hundred and seventy two are T intersections, which is a large percentage. Each intersection represents a potential point of conflict, which reduces the carrying capacity of the adjacent roadway section. Every time you have a turn movement it slows everybody down, and the capacity of the roadway is reduced as a result. When T intersections are permitted it essentially doubles the number of conflict points beyond what is necessary. Most of the intersections in town do not have turn lanes, so when a turn movement occurs, traffic is delayed until the gap permits the turn movement. There are only two East/West thoroughfares which continue thru the town or near the town. There is Belshaw which is near the Town, and Commercial Ave. which is thru the Town. Mr. Mandon stated there are numerous curb cuts and intersections on Commercial Ave. between Holtz Road & Austin Street which is a distance of less than 3 miles. He stated that on Commercial Ave., due to numerous points of conflicts and turn movements, the average speed is low and the traffic moves well below the posted speed limit which has compromised the capacity to move traffic. Most State roads were built to connect municipalities together with direct, uncluttered thoroughfares, but because of the Town's growths and land usage, the ability to move traffic was sacrificed. Mr. Mandon referred to one of his maps and discussed the seven North/South arterials in or near the Town. Discussion followed on these arterials and there strengths and/or weaknesses.

Mr. Mandon stated he would like to discuss traffic counts. He explained that the best resources for traffic counts are INDOT or NIRPC. He showed the Commission the maps and where the traffic counts are located and the gaps in the years that are on these maps. Some of the information on the maps is also conflicting. He explained that any improvements made to the traffic system would require new detail traffic counts. Mr. Mandon discussed traffic counts on some of the major roads and intersections in or near Town. He explained how the traffic count number on Commercial shows that forty percent of the road traffic on Commercial is local and travels within Town.

Mr. Mandon moved on to discuss classifying the various roadways in Town. He referred to a map and explained the color coding on the map and the purposes of arterial, collector, and local roadways. He also explained what each of these roadways intentions were.

Mr. Mandon stated he would like to discuss the Illiana expressway. The expressway is currently a grade separated roadway at Parrish, Cline, Morse, Oak and Mount. Marshall is the only roadway proposed to be disconnected. The project is being proposed as a design build, which provides the awarded contractor significant discretion on the construction. Essentially, we do not know what is going to be built until the contractor is selected. The current time table for receiving proposals from contractors is the end of this month or next month, with them awarding the design build team by the end of this year. Construction could begin in 2015, with two or three construction seasons to finish. He stated the Illiana will have several significant impacts on transportation systems in or near the Town. The land use demands, especially near the interchanges, will change dramatically and transportation related uses will dominate in those areas. Access will be limited and property could be degraded based on the proposed land uses in the area. Near the interchanges at IN41 and IN55 it is important to prevent low quality property devaluing land uses. The best way to influence the land uses in these locations is to annex the property before the development occurs. The Town should enter into discussion with the County Planning Commission in order to gain some influence over the zoning and land uses in that area.

Mr. Mandon stated he would like to address the recommended improvement in the transportation system which will result in lower traffic times, reduced congestion, and fewer emissions. He stated he is not intending to make a list of projects for the Town to take on. Parties benefiting from these improvements should pay for their share of the improvement benefits. He referred to the maps and discussed various roadways that should be extended and the benefits of implementing the thoroughfare plan so that when development takes place the opportunity to use private funds to get these improvements made will not be lost. Mr. Mandon stated that some of these improvements may take years, or some may not get done at all due to land acquisition or public opposition. Councilman Kuiper asked how the list of improvements is prioritized. Mr. Mandon stated the list is by different areas and that, in his opinion, Burr Street should be highest priority on the list and the most likely to build first, because that is where the most development will take place. Discussion followed. Mr. Carras asked Mr. Mandon about a specific area of roadway improvement in Heritage Falls and if that should be a high priority since they are developing there now. Mr. Mandon explained that you can change the plan or add to the plan before it is adopted as you see fit. Once it is adopted, if the development occurs in areas faster than others, you as a Plan Commission can make sure that they follow the plan and do not insert too many cul-de-sacs or T intersections in the development. Mr. Parker stated the goal here is to set a plan and then have the developers make the improvements. Mr. Mandon discussed how every time a

development comes in, you can refer to the transportation map and make sure that the improvement, functions the way it should. Mr. Early stated there are subdivisions currently under development, and asked if we adopt this thoroughfare plan, could we impose these improvements on the developer now. Mr. Mandon stated as long as the subdivision has not been finalized or approved. Mr. Early asked if we could impose our thoroughfare plan on subdivisions which are out of town, such as Misty Glen. Mr. Mandon stated that you cannot impose the plan, but you can have discussions with the Lake County Plan Commission so that they are aware of the thoroughfare plan. They may not implement it, but you can also send somebody to the public meeting. Discussion followed on Heritage Falls and The Misty Glen development and the roadways in the subdivision. Mr. Trulley stated that he has had a discussion with Nate Kleefisch, of Tri Creek School Corporation, and if we extend S. Burr, the school would be more than willing to help fund the roadway.

Mr. Mandon stated the next part of the presentation entailed discussing an alternate East/West arterial. Discussion followed on various improvements that would need to be made to implement this roadway and the obstacles that had to be addressed by making use of existing roadways. The only impediment that remains is a CSX gate crossing. Mr. Mandon discussed some of the ways to overcome this obstacle. Discussion followed on other areas on the thoroughfare plan that need to be addressed before development occurs.

Mr. Mandon brought up the next part of the improvements, which had to do with standards. In order to enforce the privately funded portion of the thoroughfare plan improvement, appropriate standards need to be in ordinance form so that we can require developers to abide by them. Discussion followed on the sections of Zoning Ordinances that already exist and are enforceable. Mr. Mandon stated additional code requirements do not seem to be necessary to enforce the thoroughfare plan.

Mr. Mandon showed diagrams of lane configurations, specifically at signalized intersections, and discussion followed. Mr. Mandon continued on with discussions about Commercial Avenue lane configurations and what improvements he is recommending for Commercial Ave. He stated that he is recommending that the four intersections that are currently interconnected have the most technologically advanced signalized available. Discussion followed. Mr. Mandon stated that he is not sure that the State is willing to make the changes he is outlining, but it is worth asking, Mr. Philpot asked Mr. Mandon if he addressed actual land widths. Discussion followed on the standards on width length of lanes.

Mr. Mandon asked the commission if they had any questions. Discussion followed on the format the Commission would like the thoroughfare report in. He suggested that once they get the report take the next several weeks to look it over, make comments and suggestions, and we can discuss it at the next meeting.

Mr. Parker asked Mr. Mandon if we adopt this plan, are we able to revise it as needed. Mr. Mandon stated these plans are living documents, you can't just write them once and follow them blindly. As your assumption changes, then you have to change your plans. There are some roadways that we, as a staff, think are more important based on development but these areas may not develop as we are predicting. Mr. Parker asked what would be the next step after the Commission reviews it. Mr. Mandon stated the process would be that it is formally recommended after a public hearing by the Plan Commission to the Town Council and the Council adopts it by resolution. Discussion followed on the roadway improvement that effects Freedom Park. Mr. Parker inquired on the congeniality of the railroad and their gate crossings. Mr. Mandon stated that they are more open to relocating the crossings then closing them. Mr. Mandon asked Mr. Trulley or Mr. Shook if they have any further comments.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further questions or comments, Mr. Early made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 PM, seconded by Mr. Philpot and carried with six ayes.

Richard Kelley, President

Elias Carras, Secretary