

LOWELL PLAN COMMISSION MEETING

MARCH 12, 2015

President Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:03P.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Recording Secretary Dianna Cade called the roll. Members answering the roll call were Elias Carras, Rick Kelly, Craig Early, Jim Konradi, Chris Salatas and Don Parker. Matt Felder was absent. Also present were Planning Consultant Jim Mandon, Town Attorney Jack Kramer, Building Official Tom Trulley and one citizen.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Parker made a motion to approve the February 12th, 2015 regular meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Konradi and carried with six ayes.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion – Complete Prioritization of Goals

Mr. Mandon stated a discussion was held at the last meeting regarding re-prioritizing, and updating the goals list for the Plan Commission to forward to the Town Council. Mr. Mandon stated he had asked the members to forward him any comments, additions, or changes they would like to make to the list. Mr. Mandon stated that he received responses from Mr. Early, Mr. Parker and Mr. Salatas in terms of what they would like to see. Mr. Mandon stated that he thought it might be easier if we make a short term list and a long term list, some of these goals might be important but they are more of a long range goal. Mr. Mandon stated that in terms of prioritizing the current list there are some differences that he thinks are going to be difficult to iron out; therefore, the short term and long term list would accommodate the requests. Discussion followed.

Mr. Mandon asked if they wanted to go over their individual recommendations/changes from the original list.

Mr. Early stated that he agreed with Mr. Parker that the number one priority should be the capital improvement plan. Mr. Early stated that the Route 2 overlay plan was equally as important and he prioritized that as 1A. Mr. Early stated the rest of the goals and his recommendations for them. Discussion followed.

Mr. Parker stated he thinks that the Town has to develop a capital improvement plan, which would include the water and sewer study, improve downtown, additional railroad crossings, and the implementation of the thoroughfare plan. Discussion followed.

Mr. Parker stated he felt that establishing a marketing plan for the Town was important and possibly the downtown merchants association can help us with this. Discussion followed.

Mr. Parker stated the rest of the goals and his recommendations for them. Discussion followed.

Mr. Parker stated that he feels that annexation is a very important goal. Mr. Parker stated that if the landowners do not want to sell, we the Town, can not do anything about

it, he believes that we need to give businesses more land options. Mr. Mandon stated that he feels that it is counterproductive to go out and look for an industry when the property is not zoned right, it has no new utilities, you are stymied that way, but if you look for people who set property up for sale then I think you are accomplishing something. Discussion followed.

Mr. Parker stated that he understands access to Freedom Park is something everybody wants to do, and that costs money. Discussion followed.

Mr. Parker stated that he felt that reinvigorating the downtown area should be the function of the merchants association. Mr. Parker stated that he is all for reinvigorating the downtown area, but he is also in favor of making the buildings compliant with current codes and standards. Mr. Parker stated he believes that the Town Council needs to stand strong on this issue. Mr. Parker stated that some people need to understand that some of those buildings need to be renovated. Mr. Parker then stated we need to be encouraging them to upgrade them. Mr. Mandon asked if we knew who owned the downtown buildings and if we had a business registration. Mr. Trulley stated no. Mr. Early stated that is a very good question and how do we do that. Discussion followed on business registration. Mr. Trulley stated that the former police chief had suggested to not charge the businesses for registration, but by requiring this, the emergency responders would have contact information for the building owners, which in some cases they do not have now. Mr. Parker stated that there may be structural issues with some of these buildings making them unsafe. Mr. Trulley stated that the staff tried to hold a building owner accountable in the past; however, if they do not touch their building it is considered an existing structure and the State recognizes it under their Rule #13, and they do not have to comply with the current codes. Mr. Parker asked for clarification. Discussion followed.

Mr. Parker stated that we need to work on the Route 2 overlay plan. Mr. Parker stated that in his opinion that is a short term goal.

Mr. Parker stated that establishing the TIF should be done every time a parcel is annexed. Discussion followed. Mr. Mandon asked what staff member or consultant is responsible for establishing the TIF. Discussion followed. Mr. Parker stated that he felt that it should be a Town staff member and not a paid consultant. Mr. Early stated that he believed that the financial consultant, Mr. Gutierrez, had to be involved. Discussion followed. Mr. Mandon stated that it is extremely important that as soon as the property is annexed there has to be discussions on whether this meets the criteria for the TIF district. Discussion followed. Mr. Parker stated that he wanted Mr. Mandon to identify the land uses on annexed property and then Mr. Reardon can identify the TIF use once he receives the land use from Mr. Mandon.

Mr. Parker stated that he believes that the Town of Lowell also needs to get actively involved in discussions with INDOT regarding Route 2. Discussion followed.

Mr. Salatas stated these long term plans are needed, including the capital improvement plan. Mr. Salatas stated that you need something to hold future councils to and give them guidance when they get on board; you need to hold them to this. Mr. Salatas stated that there was a previous water study in the final stage that was never completed and we are just now working on that. Mr. Salatas stated that you can make all the plans you want, but people have to see the same way. Mr. Salatas stated that with the annexation plans, half of the people want to go east and half want to go west. Discussion followed. Mr. Salatas stated that those are his concerns and that all the other goals have already been covered and he does not want to reiterate them.

Mr. Early asked for verification on the funding for the water/sewer plan. Mr. Early stated his understanding is that it is something that would not be funded from a comprehensive plan. Mr. Early stated that the money would have to come from the utilities fund or from increases to the rate payers. Mr. Mandon stated that is correct. Mr. Early asked if those studies do not get included in the capital improvement plan. Mr. Mandon stated the capital improvement plan would be funded from more than one source. Mr. Mandon stated that you make plans for a whole variety of improvements regardless of who is responsible for them. Mr. Mandon stated that you then try to prioritize those, because that is how you are going to use your money. Mr. Mandon stated you would include sewer improvements, street improvements, accessibility projects, water mains, overhead storage etc. Mr. Mandon stated that you would bring in different funding sources such as general, grant money, utilities etc. Mr. Early asked if that can be part of the yearly budget. Discussion followed. Mr. Mandon stated that the plan makes sure that you do not spend the same money more than once and allocates the money. Mr. Parker stated that one of the other important things that a capital plan does, is it keeps the goals in front of you and allows you to start searching for funding.

Mr. Mandon asked if the Board would like for him to come up with a short and long term list and the Board can then discuss forwarding a recommendation to the council. Mr. Early and Mr. Kelly stated yes. Mr. Mandon asked if there is anything else that they would like to add.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Parker announced that this would be the last meeting for Mr. Jack Kramer. Discussion followed.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further comments or questions Mr. Parker, made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:50pm, seconded by Mr. Early and carried by a voice vote.

Richard Kelley, President

Elias Carras, Secretary

