



MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
City Hall Forum - 100 State Street, Beloit, WI 53511
7:00 PM
Wednesday, March 23, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. Chairman Weeden, Commissioners Anderson, Finnegan, Jacobsen, Ramsden, Toral, and Councilor Preuschl were present.

2. MINUTES

2.a. Consideration of the minutes of February 23, 2022 Plan Commission meeting

Motion was made by Commissioner Ramsden, seconded by Commissioner Finnegan to approve the minutes. Motion prevailed, voice vote (6-0).

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

No public hearings.

4. REPORTS

4.a. Consideration of the vacation of the portion of Gateway Boulevard right-of-way located adjacent to 1901 Gateway Boulevard

Julie Christensen, Community Development Director, presented the staff report and recommendation.

Councilor Preuschl asked if this was similar to the other project in the Gateway. Ms. Christensen explained that when the City established the Gateway Business Park, they were not worried about locating all the storm water areas on separate lots, as they were located on City lots. They simply put them in easements. As properties are being sold, Ms. Christensen explained that the City is trying to get them onto their own lots under City control.

Chairperson Weeden asked if it is the City's intent to own and maintain both the lots. Ms. Christensen said the City's intention is to retain lot one and out lot one, and then to sell the remainder of the land. Commissioner Anderson asked if the City would keep ownership of the retention pond long-term and wouldn't that set a precedent. Ms. Christensen said that the City will retain ownership, as these are retention areas for the park. Ms. Christensen went on to explain that when a developer develops a site, they may be required to provide a detention area. Those ponds remain under their ownership, and they are responsible for maintaining them.

Commissioner Finnegan moved to approve the vacation of Gateway Boulevard right-of-way located adjacent to 1901 Gateway Boulevard, seconded by Commission Jacobsen. Motion carried, roll call vote (6-0).

4.b. Consideration of a two-lot Certified Survey Map for the property located at 1901 and 1851 Gateway Boulevard in the City of Beloit

Julie Christensen, Community Development Director, presented the staff report and recommendation.

Commissioner Anderson moved to approve the two-lot Certified Survey Map for the property located at 1901 and 1851 Gateway Boulevard, seconded by Commission Ramsden. Motion carried, roll call vote (6-0).

4.c. Consideration of Plan Commission Initiatives

Chairperson Weeden said that he wanted to discuss roles and responsibilities of the Commission. Chairperson Weeden indicated that one of the Plan Commission's roles is the generation and management of the Comprehensive Plan. Chairperson Weeden said it is ironic that the long term plan for the City is centralized here on the Commission, but on a week-to-week basis, it is short term administration. Chairperson Weeden said the Commission could play a broader role in managing the Comprehensive Plan rather than what the Plan Commission is being directed to do.

Chairperson Weeden said that with the discussion in November with the City Council President and the City Manager, they were either ignored or cut off. Chairperson Weeden said that the Plan Commissioners have a responsibility as appointees to use the diverse skills, experience, and knowledge to benefit the City. Chairperson Weeden stated there is an opportunity for Plan Commission to act as a partner for City Council, and City Council could benefit from the Plan Commission if they knew how to use them as a group of partners with the ability to dig deeper and work with staff on problems. Chairperson Weeden said if the City Council looked at Plan Commission properly, they could benefit from them.

Commissioner Ramsden said that with the unenthusiastic response from City Council and the City Manager might limit them, but he said that he would be in favor of extending their role.

Commissioner Jacobsen said that she reviewed the statues on establishing Plan Commission as well as the City Ordinance and also attended the training through Rock County a few weeks ago. Commissioner Jacobsen said that there could be things that they can do, and thinks that everything does not need to be changed. Commissioner Jacobsen said that a lack of response from City Council does not equal a lack of cooperation. Commissioner Jacobsen said that maybe Plan Commission needs to go back to the basics.

Chairperson Weeden stated that City administration has identified the minimum statutory things that Plan Commission has responsibility over, and that is fine but the point is there is opportunity to do more if there is cooperation from City Council and City staff. Councilor Preuschl stated that he supported having Plan Commission approve Conditional Use Permits.

Commissioner Toral stated that he was surprised that the City Manager said something along the lines of the Commission not appreciating staff's hard work and wants to reassure them that they respect the City Staff and their work. Commissioner Toral said that what is important is to make government more effective and to take responsibility in their roles. Commissioner Toral said they should try to approach City Council differently, and address things better.

Commissioner Finnegan said that we have the Strategic Plan that Plan Commission works off of, and he mentioned that it would be nice to have a more mixed use in the community as a walking community. Commissioner Finnegan said that some appraisers that he has talked with think it is strange some single family areas are not broken up with other uses.

Commissioner Jacobsen said that Plan Commission should pick some items and work through them, and if Plan Commission wants to take on conditional use permits, that may make it easier for staff and applicants. Chairperson Weeden asked Ms. Christensen if there are issues that come on to City Staff that sometimes they do not have time to work on or through, and Plan Commission could put some time and effort to help. Ms. Christensen stated that City Staff gets done what they can get done, and has not thought about how the Plan Commission could help.

Ms. Christensen said that there could be an opportunity to look at specific areas of the City, that Plan Commission could try to put together with some alternative land use plan, such as duplexes in neighborhoods. Ms. Christensen said that there are few areas that are zoned for duplexes in Beloit, but does not know how the neighbors would react to that. Commissioner Finnegan stated that the market is crazy for rentals right now, and they need more rentals because more rentals are being purchased by owner-occupants. Ms. Christensen said that there are not enough rentals, and Section 8 tenants are having a difficult time finding units to rent. Ms. Christensen agreed that we need to have a variety of housing styles, and Drew Pennington is working on tiny homes ordinance to allow smaller units.

Chairperson Weeden asked if Ms. Christensen could put together a list of possible projects that could be taken on and then allow Plan Commission to designate two-three people to work with staff. Ms. Christensen said that the Chairperson can appoint a subcommittee, subject to confirmation by the Commission. The meetings would need to be noticed and minutes would need to be taken.

Commissioner Toral said that the Comprehensive Plan is a wonderful document to refer to and work through that is concrete and open ended, and Plan Commission could use the document to give them something to focus on.

Chairperson Weeden asked Ms. Christensen if there is a list that she and City staff could put together for Plan Commission could go off of. Ms. Christensen said yes, that she would see what they could put together. Chairperson Weeden asked if City Council or City Manager would feel threatened by a larger decision making process, having Plan Commission do some additional initiatives. Ms. Christensen said that the City Manager was waiting for Plan Commission to put together something for her to respond to.

Chairperson Weeden asked Plan Commission if any of them disagree with asking Ms. Christensen and City staff to work with them on a list. Chairperson Weeden said that another thing on the list would be the Conditional Use Permits (CUP) being delegated to the Commission. Commissioner Anderson said that their approach to City Council needs to be different, and maybe they should come up with a list of a few things that could have a positive impact and add value.

Chairperson Weeden asked if the CUP initiative is too big to tackle, as it would require an ordinance change. Commissioner Anderson said no that he thinks Plan Commission should add that to the list. Councilor Preuschl said that the CUP is so limited now, and they are difficult to deny. Commissioner Finnegan said that it would limit a step, and could be done in one night. Commissioner Jacobsen said it is just a recommendation, and the Plan Commission has more to deal with the applicant than City Council and City Council really just approves what Plan Commission recommends.

Ms. Christensen said that Plan Commission should vote on which initiatives that Plan Commission would like to do, and then the next step would take it to the City Council President and City Manager. Commissioner Jacobsen asked Ms. Christensen if they would need to make it in a formal resolution. Ms. Christensen said she was going to create a resolution, but she did not know what to put in the resolution, but that Plan Commission could put it on the next agenda. Chairperson Weeden asked if any Plan Commissioners would object to allowing Plan Commission to approve Conditional Use Permits. Ms. Christensen said that she would create a list with specific items to put on the agenda.

Commissioner Ramsden asked how many Conditional Use Permits have ended up in circuit court. Ms. Christensen said none since she has been here.

4.d. Presentation of the 80-100 East Grand Avenue project

Julie Christensen, Community Development Director, presented the staff report.

Chairperson Weeden asked if the final design would come to Plan Commission. Ms. Christensen stated that it would not. It would a staff-approved architectural review. Chairperson Weeden said that this is a major downtown development, and Plan Commission should be involved. Ms. Christensen said that Plan Commission's only role would be a Certified Survey Map to lay out the lots for the building, parking lot, and path. Councilor Preuschl asked if the Downtown Beloit Association (DBA) has a say in this development. Ms. Christensen said the DBA has a design committee and would review this design.

Commissioner Jacobsen said if the DBA had power to approve it, and if they do not like it then what happens. Ms. Christensen said DBA only has review authority, but City staff tries to work with them. Chairperson Weeden asked if Plan Commission should be involved at some level, as part of the design. Chairperson Weeden said that this is the kind of item that should be added to the list to talk about to City Council. Chairperson Weeden said since Plan Commission is responsible for a part of the plan that they should have a say about the design as well. Ms. Christensen asked Chairperson Weeden if it would be all buildings or just buildings downtown. Chairperson Weeden said that would be a question for discussion, but that is a perfect example of items Plan Commission should be involved in.

Commissioner Toral said this project is fantastic, and he does not know why the building would be done without windows. Ms. Christensen said that this is a rendering of the building, and not the final design. Commissioner Toral said it is not Plan Commission's job to tell people how to build the buildings. Chairperson Weeden said the opposite point to that would be to allow a building to go up downtown without windows. Commissioner Toral said the applicant has the right to build a building they like.

Councilor Preuschl said that the picture is preliminary design and nothing final. Ms. Christensen said the applicant has done massing, and have yet to hire an architect. Ms. Christensen said they were more focused on the massing of the building, and City staff has the ability to review the building under architectural review. Ms. Christensen said that she does not think City Council would give Plan Commission authority over every architectural review. On average, we complete around 100 Architectural Reviews each year. Ms. Christensen agreed to add that to the list for consideration at the next meeting.

5. STATUS REPORT ON PRIOR PLAN COMMISSION ITEMS

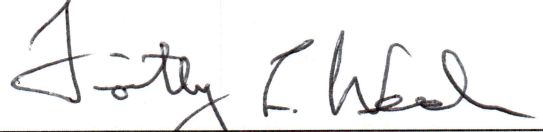
Ms. Christensen updated the Plan Commission on the actions taken by City Council related to a variety of items previously reviewed by Plan Commission. Ms. Christensen said the next Plan Commission meeting is scheduled for April 6, 2022.

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Julie Christensen outlined the future agenda items.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Finnegan moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commission Ramsden at 8:30 PM. Motion carried, voice vote (6-0).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy F. Weeden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and 'W'.

Timothy Weeden, Chairperson