

Athens City Planning Commission
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Thursday, July 3, 2014, 12:00 p.m.

The regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held in the Council Chambers, third floor, at City Hall on July 3, 2014.

Attendees: Conor Morris.

1. **Call to Order**

Nicholas Bittner called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 12:12 p.m. and administered the oath to all who intended to speak before the commission. Quorum was established.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Nicholas Bittner, Chair Present
RJ Sumney, Vice Chair Absent
Nancy Bain Present
Paul Wiehl, Mayor Present
Paula Horan Moseley, Service-Safety Director..... Present

STAFF:

Paul Logue, City Planner Present
John Paszke, Director of DEF Absent

2. **Disposition of Minutes**

Nicholas Bittner moved to approve the minutes of June 19, 2014. Paul Wiehl seconded. All voted aye.

3. **Cases**

None

4. **Communications**

Title 23, Zoning Code, Corridor Discussions

East State Street Corridor – Paula Horan Moseley

Paul Horan Moseley gave the commission members copies of her observations of the corridor, East State Street Corridor Plan Map, Comprehensive Plan Phase II Implementation, and photos.

The East State Street corridor is a significant corridor and should serve as “helping to define community identity”. Paula Horan Moseley felt the East State Street area was lacking in this; the entrance is not clearly defined and there are no landscaped features

other than the Project Plant Island.

The East State strip is “sterile”, with no cohesive features and signage issues. The area is not welcoming to bicycles or pedestrians, though cyclists can access from the rear on the southern side of the street from the bike path.

The zoning in this corridor is very permissive. The residential neighborhood has been rezoned to protect the residential feel but the existing zones do encroach upon this neighborhood.

There is a lack of adequate pedestrian accommodations that hopefully will be improved with the planned safety initiatives in this corridor; proposed sidewalk on the southern side of the street.

The Comprehensive Plan recommended changes to parking that would develop a much needed landscape strip to provide welcoming entrances to the businesses. Screening of the rear facades to protect the beauty of the bike path was also recommended.

Paula Horan Moseley felt this point was very interesting. The plan asked for consideration of a city policy that would limit continued eastward growth and expansion in order to encourage re-use. Nancy Bain said the previous administration discussed Holzer as a natural divider for the end of the city limits. Paul Wiehl said expansion out to Dow Lake has been discouraged in the past.

Paula Horan Moseley wanted to clarify that the statement from the Comprehensive Plan was to encourage re-use by using the multiple large tracts of open land within the city before expanding outside the city limits.

Nicholas Bittner asked how this would be implemented in an overlay to limit annexation. There is no active goal to annex property by the City of Athens. Most annexations have occurred through a property owners request using the application process. City services such as fire and police are becoming stretched and should be a consideration in any annexation.

The commission discussed properties that have been annexed into the city and the procedure to do this. Nancy Bain said an annexation request located above Graham Drive was declined because the topography would not allow for adequate water pressure to provide city services.

The existing building setbacks vary considerably along the East State Street corridor. The commission members looked at the street frontage design outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. There is landscaping located near the street in front of Lowes and Walmart. Paula Horan Moseley commented that the Athens Shade Tree Commission has been instrumental in requiring landscaping in new developments.

Current construction includes the hotel on East State Street. Smaller lots are located on the north side. Ohio University growth could be possible, causing significant changes to the East State area.

Current buildings for sale, such as the Maplewood, denser population in this area, with a triage look farther out East State Street and vehicular traffic are all factors in the future of this corridor. The zoning on East State Street is primarily B-3. This is the most vibrant commercial corridor in the city.

The proposed plans from ODOT for a modified divergent diamond will impact the area. The city will need easements for the southern pedestrian walkway.

The commission discussed off street parking. Paul Logue asked, is there too much parking. Paula Horan Moseley said there is a mix of times when parking spots are needed but there is a lot of asphalt on East State Street. Past discussions about the widening of East State Street has faced difficulty in obtaining property for the widening.

Sidewalks installed on the southern portion could face challenges because of topography and water line locations.

The City Planner provided the commission with information regarding manufacturing zones.

Currently, there are definitions in the Athens City Code for manufacturing, extractive; manufacturing, heavy; and manufacturing, light. These terms are only mentioned in the definitions of Athens City Code.

Section 23.04.08 in the city code outlines an Industrial Zone and these are indicated as purple on the map. Some of the Industrial Zones are located in the Wellhead Protection area. Paul Logue said the Wellhead Protection requirements would need to be followed. There are prohibited activities in the Wellhead Protection areas.

Very specific uses are outlined in the Industrial Zone as defined by the code. Residential is prohibited but there is no separation of the degrees of manufacturing from heavy to light. The commission has discussed allowing for light manufacturing, possibly on Columbus Road, and defining heavy manufacturing.

The code was changed from a performance based zoning to the current industrial zone definition. Should residential be prohibited in a light manufacturing zone.

A basic definition of heavy industry could be characterized by large scale, smokestacks, and noise. Light industry could operate in a small scale site and make small products bought by end users.

Nicholas Bittner said fracking has been a heavily opposed operation by the majority of citizens in Athens, how or would it be prohibited in manufacturing.

The Stimson area is the last corridor that needs to be discussed by the commission.

5. **Report from City Planner and Director DEF**

Paul Logue

1. A new County Planner was hired and will start on July 14; good fit for Athens.
2. The Essence of Athens Plan is final and is in the printing process.
3. The Ridge Master Plan – Advisory Committee Meeting
Schooley Caldwell detailed building assessment – buildings as a whole in good shape, water and vermin are key threats, costs to renovate include the citizen's interest in preservation as part of the plan.
4. Historic Preservation Certified Local Government training date scheduled tentatively for August 5, 2014.

6. **Opportunity for Citizens to Speak**

None

7. **Announcements & Other Business**

The Municipal Arts Commission has asked for the consideration in Title 41 to encourage arts to be addressed. It was suggested that a hand out could be given to developers from the Arts Commission promoting arts.

The next meeting of the commission will be July 17, 2014.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:16 p.m.



Nicholas Bittner, Chairperson
City Planning Commission

Sharlene Bails, Recording Secretary
City of Athens