



PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION MINUTES

March 9, 2022 at 6:30 PM in Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL- Mr. Adler called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Present- Adler, Jaskiewicz, Swank, Carney, Harriman

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Jaskiewicz motioned to approve the Planning and Zoning Commission-Regular Meeting from February 16, 2022, seconded by Mayor Carney. All yeas.

COMMUNICATION

Zoning (Ms. Brill)

She stated that there are no applications to constitute having the regular meeting next week. She stated the Village is working with OHM on the Uptown Plan. They are going to be meeting with stakeholders soon to get their insight. The plans for the second phase of the streetscape are being worked on currently and the village will be moving forward with a comprehensive branding initiative, which should kick off soon.

BZA (Mr. Jaskiewicz)

Mr. Jaskiewicz did not have anything to report

Mayor Carney

She met with local officials on March 2nd to discuss the Darby Creek and preservation initiative. This will be a continual conversation in the future. She has also been working with local businesses as well.

WORK SESSION

Zoning Code Draft Presentation/Discussion

Mr. Adler stated that the focus of the meeting was to discuss the zoning code and where it is at currently in draft form. He introduced the consultant from OHM who was present to provide a presentation.

Mr. Kim Littleton stated this has been ongoing for about a year. The update of the zoning code was a recommendation from the Comprehensive Plan and currently this rewrite will help to

accommodate the growth and future of Plain City. The comprehensive plan has provided insight for the direction of the Code update. He provided some background on why the code is being updated and a summary of the diagnostic report based on what the comprehensive plan stated and where the current code worked well and did not. The current zoning map was used along with the planned land use map in the comp plan to create a new proposed zoning map and districts. A key finding from this process was that there is growth occurring amidst changing preferences in the region. This included the desire for smaller homes on smaller lots that are more walkable to community amenities. There are also more age groups desiring various housing types/options, and desire for bike/transit connections. It was found that housing diversity would benefit residents, future residents and local businesses.

The code revision process is comprised of four phases. Currently we are in end of phase three with the public draft preparation and review. The final phase is the approval phase with Planning Commission and Council. In the diagnostic matrix that was created to help show where the current code preformed well in meeting the goals of the comprehensive plan. The current code provides protection for trees and waterways, but prohibited many existing agricultural uses. The code also included provisions for sidewalks and trails, but shies away from creating a walkable core due to excessive parking requirements, insufficient density allowances, prohibited dwelling uses, and wide setbacks. Recommendations included providing more illustrative standards, consolidating definition section, and consider some architectural requirements, improve walkability, and broaden uses in the commercial and rural districts from mixed uses to agri-tourism, allow conservation subdivisions in multiple districts in lieu of planned development.

The code is organized into various sections to include an introduction to the code, districts, uses, generally applicable standards, typologies, nonconformities, administration and procedures, and glossary. In the districts chapter 7 districts have been proposed. Mr. Adler noted an oversight change with the numbering that did not match. Mr. Harriman noticed a district that was included in the table the was not longer in the code. Staff noted the corrections. Mr. Adler noted some districts that needed to be added to the legend, particularly the rural residential and agricultural districts. He also noted something that may need changed in the agricultural district with the proposed 40ft minimum. The commission asked what the practical application of the agricultural districts were for incoming annexations, and what the incentive was for someone to annex and be zoned in that district. Staff noted the ability to have public utilities and the provision to have some agricultural land set aside. The proposed code accommodates conservation/preservation requirements for developers wanting to build residential projects. A certain percentage of land set aside for conservation/preservation correlates to some increased density allowances. Ms. Carney noted that having a maximum on structures in the agricultural would be limiting, perhaps minimum and maximum should be flipped.

Councilman Terry asked how does the current zoning map can be overlaid with a future map for uses outside of the boundaries. Ms. Brill suggested updating the land use map in the comprehensive plan to match the new districts are proposed in the new zoning code. This will allow for better planning of districts and therefore allowed uses as the Village expands. Mr.

Adler posed the overall question that comes up a lot at planning commission is how to plan for the future growth of Plain City. He stated having a planned land use map and a current zoning map that work together, it helps the village plan as new proposals come in and developers as they are planning projects.

Mr. Adler wanted to discuss lot sizes as proposed in some of the residential districts. Ms. Brill stated that some of these minimums were derived based on the calibration table process. We compared on the ground measurements, the current code and comprehensive plans recommendations, and came to these minimums. These minimums allow for some flexibility in terms of housing type. Mr. Harriman stated he disagreed with the statement that people want smaller homes and lots. Mr. Jon Melchi from the BIA provided some insight on trends in builders industry stating that the average size of the home has increased, but the size of the lot has decreased over the past 20 years. People tend to live in there front and back yards, not the side yard so more developments are moving towards that trend. Mr. Melchi stated that the median lot size in the United States is around 1/5 of an acre, and almost 40% of homes built in 2020 were under 6,000sqft lot sizes.

Mr. Swank provided some statistic he pulled together from surrounding communities. He stated that the minimum in the Suburban Residential District is less than the surrounded communities. Mr. Littleton stated that a lot of new development has gone in as Planned Developments, so you will not see those lot sizes in the zoning text. He stated typically what you will see in some codes that lay out the R1, R2, etc. districts, those are prescribed by the congress department in the 20's. Mr. Swank voiced concerns with developers only developing to the minimum standard. Ms. Brill stated that perhaps instead of a matter of numbers and figures it is the essential character and development pattern that should be considered.

Mr. Littleton stated that if the community's goal is housing diversity, considering the concept of aging in place in Plain City is important and having homes to accommodate this. He also discussed a similar scenario with younger generation that want to move back to Plain City, stating affordability can be a challenge. Mr. Adler acknowledged this is something happening in the community and used himself as an example, posing how to balance this with the desire to have larger lots/home.

Mr. Swank stated Dublin is an aspirational city to look at because of their forward thinking planning of areas. He stated that perhaps we are focused on too small of an area. Variety of housing is important, but there needs to be zones and districts for it.

Mr. Littleton talked about the importance of the Darby Creek as a natural resource, but also a natural edge for the community. He discussed the importance of protecting this resource while considering new development. This was taken into consideration in the code to keep the lot sizes with a fair amount of impervious surface. Its all a balancing act. He discussed some communities do not have parking standards to let the market dictate where parking is needed to limit the amount of impervious surface parking lots.

Mr. Adler asked about how the code would work without planned developments. What prevent a developer from creating dense neighborhood with no green space. Ms. Brill stated it would be

much like a site plan proposal, in an already established district. They would be subject to the standards in the code for subdividing, to include district standards, generally applicable standards, to open space dedication requirements. Mr. Littleton stated that the topography will also influence how much of a lot can be built and where at on the lot. He also stated that with planned districts, the Village is letting the developer decide how the community is built, with the straight district method it is more of a de-facto community plan, where the Village now gets to decide.

Mr. Adler asked what happens with the straight zoning concept in five years if the market demands something different. Mr. Harriman stated he had issue with the houses side yard setback being too close together. Mr. Swank did not see why there couldn't be four different districts with minimum lot sizes and standards to let the developer choose which one. Mr. Jaskiewicz stated this way would limit where things can go by trying to fit them in a neat box, where they might not fit. He stated that there is more flexibility in the plan being proposed and lets people to be creative and come up with different plans. There might be a great product that might not fit into the tight confines of a standard district, therefore limiting creativity and restricting development in the future. He stated he understands the concerns with developers submitting plans that meet the minimums that then have to be approved because it meets code. Having ways to manage this is important. Mr. Harriman stated that in his mind medium density fits more of lots like the size of the ones of Copperfield at 8,000sqft lots. Mr. Adler stated he would like to see where this has been applied in other places.

Mr. Littleton stated a Westerville example that uses some density bonuses in three different districts. Mr. Adler stated that this seems like a good practice but it is not what's being proposed. Mr. Littleton also cautioned that the appearance of density can be deceiving. He stated an example of a community that has 12du/ac but looks like a single-family neighborhood, just by the architecture and configuration of units on site. He stated that setting a density floor, then if standards are met then it allows for increased density. Mr. Swank stated he did not think this would work with the minimum proposed. Mr. Adler asked Mr. Melchi if this was happening around Central Ohio. Mr. Melchi stated that there are not many examples currently, most being handled through planned developments because codes are so outdated. He stated if the density allowances were reasonable, he thinks developers would be interested in hearing more. He stated also to keep in mind that the more complicated a code is to navigate the more difficult and costly it is for the developer. Mr. Melchi stated that developers are not in the business to build what people do not want. The market is dictating how homes are being developed and built. He stated that also that the price of land is also a factor in terms of trends, the more land the more expensive it is to develop and therefore to purchase for the homeowner.

Mayor Carney stated she believed based on conversations with realtors' people are in the market for larger lots. Plain City is a desirable place to live. We know growth is coming but we are trying to dial in what those in Plain City want. Mr. Adler stated that having various different products at different price points for people to enter the market and live in Plain City. He desires having a process that is more streamlined through the public approval process in the future. Mr. Terry stated that there is a lot of merit in having a flexible code, but it will take

telegraphing the expectations and standards upfront. He stated that to get the variety of housing it will take a lot of upfront conversations with the developers to get this desired end product. Mr. Harriman circled back around with how density bonuses can be factored into the code. Mr. Littleton stated that the prescribed densities can be illustrated in the code to give clear standards that can be worked with. This is more effective than a PUD because it is no longer a blank slate.

Mr. Littleton stated that the code does not have density bonuses in it now and the commission would need to decide what districts these apply to. Mr. Adler stated the Suburban Residential District. Mr. Jaskiewicz asked if this was just density that this can be applied to. Mr. Adler stated to also consider side yard setbacks. Mr. Lafayette suggested looking at Hilliard's code. Mr. Adler wanted to see what this would look like in the code.

Mr. Littleton stated that the code also includes typologies to show how a variety of housing types can be built. Mr. Loebig stated that by having composes of various housing types in a development creates a neighborhood. Mr. Littleton stated that in some communities they are mixing uses in residential neighborhoods and you would never know that some homes are not single family uses without really looking at it. Mr. Adler asked for some guidance on how the incentive bonuses can be factored in the SR district.

Ms. Brill stated they have been taking notes and will come back with revisions to present to the commission. She asked that the commission look through the rest of the document and provide any additional feedback.

No more items were discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm