

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING**

**URBANA PLAN COMMISSION**

**APPROVED**

**DATE:** January 30, 2020

**TIME:** 5:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** Urbana City Building  
Executive Conference Rooms  
400 South Vine Street  
Urbana, IL 61801

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dustin Allred, Jane Billman, Andrew Fell, Tyler Fitch, Lew Hopkins, Jonah Weisskopf, Chenxi Yu

**STAFF PRESENT:** Kevin Garcia, Planner II; Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant II

**OTHERS PRESENT:** None

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**1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM**

Chair Fitch called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Roll call was taken, and there was a quorum of the members in attendance.

**2. COMMUNICATIONS**

- Potential Remote Attendance Language for Plan Commission Bylaws

**3. OLD BUSINESS**

**Review of Bylaws**

Chair Fitch opened this item on the agenda and noted that Planning staff had handed out a document titled, "Potential Remote Attendance Language for Plan Commission Bylaws". Kevin Garcia, Planner II, presented the bylaws for review. He introduced the proposed language for adding remote attendance at meetings. He pointed out that the Commission would need a quorum of the members present in order to allow a member to remotely attend a meeting. The person calling in would not be allowed to make the quorum for the meeting.

Chair Fitch asked if any of the members had questions for City staff.

Mr. Fell asked why a member would not be allowed to remote in to a meeting while he/she is on vacation. Mr. Garcia stated that the proposed language is from the Illinois Statute 5 ILCS120/7(c). He said he was not aware of the reasoning for this exception in the State code. Mr. Hopkins noted that allowing a member to remote in while on vacation would not really affect the outcome of a case. Mr. Weisskopf added that a member might be persuaded in ways while on vacation that he/she would not be on a business trip.

Ms. Yu arrived to the meeting at 5:36.

Ms. Billman asked if it would be possible for a member to remote in for part of a meeting. Mr. Garcia said yes, that would be allowed.

Ms. Billman asked if the member who remotes in would be allowed to vote. Mr. Garcia replied yes.

There was no audience present. Chair Fitch asked if the Plan Commission members had any discussion on the Review of the Bylaws, and there was none.

Chair Fitch stated that he did not see anything wrong with adding the proposed language into the bylaws. The Plan Commission would vote on this at the next regular meeting.

Mr. Fell asked about remoting in by video. Mr. Garcia explained that a member could use Skype to remote in. Mr. Hopkins added that “video” is intended to be a medium of remoting in, not the device.

#### **4. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

There was none.

#### **5. STUDY SESSION**

##### **Discussion on the City Code Composition of the Plan Commission**

Chair Fitch opened this item on the agenda. Kevin Garcia, Planner II, introduced the topic to the Plan Commission. He began by noting that the Plan Commission by City Code is required to have nine members. To reach a quorum, there must be five members present at a meeting, which makes reaching a quorum difficult at times and places a greater burden on individual Commission members to attend every meeting. City staff had discussed internally the restructuring of the Plan Commission to reduce the number of members from nine to seven, which would require four members present to reach a quorum, but to also have two alternate members. This would make getting a quorum easier.

Mr. Fell asked what would happen if the Plan Commission only needed one of the alternates and both showed up. Mr. Garcia replied that staff would inform the alternates who would need to attend so that only the alternate(s) needed would attend.

Mr. Hopkins stated that there may be a couple of solutions. Depending on Illinois State Law, the Plan Commission may be able to define a “quorum” in their bylaws and set the number of members required to four.

If the City reduces the number of members to seven and adds two alternates, Mr. Hopkins felt that every member should be invited to attend and participate, but only seven members would vote. Alternates in addition to the quorum would have voice, but not vote. So, there would never be more than seven votes. This might work because one or both of the alternates would likely be needed to make a quorum. An advantage to this would be that both alternates would know what is going on with the Plan Commission. He said if we do not motivate every member, then they will not learn or be vetted enough.

Mr. Hopkins asked how often Plan Commission meetings had to be cancelled due to no quorum. Mr. Fitch responded that it had only happened about five times in the twelve years he has served on the Commission. Mr. Hopkins stated that he was not sure it is worth the complexity of changing the composition of the Plan Commission members for the few number of times they have not had a quorum.

Mr. Weisskopf agreed with Mr. Hopkins. An alternate might only be needed occasionally and not learn anything about the Plan Commission.

Mr. Allred asked if their only option is to reduce the number of members to seven and have two alternates. Or would they be able to reduce the number to seven members with no alternates? Mr. Garcia answered that all options are on the table. City Council could keep the number of members at nine.

Ms. Billman asked for clarification on the number of members required for a quorum. Mr. Garcia said that a nine member board/commission would require five members present to have a quorum, and a seven member board/commission would require four members present to have a quorum.

Mr. Fell stated that he would not want four members to decide his fate on one of his projects. Five people are barely enough. Mr. Hopkins added that four members could result in many ties. Mr. Fell recommended leaving the number of Plan Commission members at nine. Mr. Hopkins stated that instead of looking for two alternates, City staff should maybe just look for two new members.

Ms. Yu suggested that the City could recruit previous Plan Commission members to fill-in when needed because full time commitment puts a large stress on members’ families. Previous members already have the knowledge of how the Plan Commission works. Being an alternate is attractive to some people.

Mr. Garcia stated that it is difficult to fill vacant positions on boards and commissions. It is hard to find people who are willing to serve.

Chair Fitch commented that in order to be a good Plan Commission member, a member needs to come to a lot of the meetings and learn how to speak out in public. He did not like the idea of a casual Plan Commission member.

Mr. Allred suggested that they try to fill the two vacant positions before deciding to reduce the number of members and/or add alternates. Mr. Fell pointed out that if they keep the number of members at nine and lose a member, there is not much of an impact. However, if the City reduces the number to seven and loses a member, then it makes it even harder to reach a quorum.

Mr. Weisskopf asked about the eligibility requirements to become a member of the Plan Commission. Mr. Garcia read the requirements. Mr. Weisskopf suggested reaching out to college students who live within the City of Urbana.

Ms. Yu asked if it was possible to keep nine members and have two alternates. Mr. Garcia said yes. He stated that the City staff wanted to introduce the idea to the Plan Commission and gather input at this time. They can discuss composition options again in the future.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kevin Garcia, Secretary  
Urbana Plan Commission