

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: September 9, 2021

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Zoom Webinar

MEMBERS ATTENDING VIA ZOOM: Jane Billman, Andrew Fell, Lew Hopkins, Debarah McFarland, Karen Simms, Jonah Weisskopf, Chenxi Yu

MEMBER ATTENDING AT CITY BUILDING: Dustin Allred

STAFF PRESENT: UPTV Camera Operator; Lorrie Pearson, Director of Community Development Services; Kat Trotter, Planner I

OTHERS ATTENDING: Chaundra Bishop, Grace Wilken

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

Chair Allred called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call was taken, and there was a quorum of the members present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the August 5, 2021 regular Plan Commission meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Fell moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Ms. Billman seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Ms. Yu	-	Yes	Mr. Weisskopf	-	Yes
Ms. McFarland	-	Yes	Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes
Mr. Fell	-	Yes	Ms. Billman	-	Yes
Mr. Allred	-	Yes			

The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2425-T-21 – A request by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to amend the Urbana Zoning Ordinance with changes to Article II (Definitions), Article V (Use Regulations), and Article VI (Development Regulations), and other relevant sections, to facilitate solar energy system installation.

Chair Allred announced that this case was continued to the September 23, 2021 regular meeting of the Plan Commission.

Plan Case No. 2426-T-21 – A request by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to amend the Urbana Zoning Ordinance with changes to Article XI (Administration, Enforcement, Amendments and Fees) and other relevant section, to change how the Zoning Administrator is appointed.

Chair Allred opened the public hearing for this case.

Kat Trotter, Planner I, stated that the newest member of the Plan Commission, Karen Simms, joined the meeting. All members of the Plan Commission are in attendance.

Ms. Trotter presented the staff report to the Plan Commission. She began by stating the purpose of the proposed text amendment, which is to have the Zoning Administrator be a designee by the Community Development Services Director as opposed to being appointed by the Mayor and City Council. The Zoning Administrator's role is regulatory and administrative in nature because this person interprets the Zoning Ordinance. The role does not change based on policy direction from the Mayor or City Council, so the proposed change would be more efficient.

Chair Allred asked if any members of the Plan Commission had questions for City staff.

Mr. Hopkins asked who the appointed Zoning Administrator is currently. Ms. Trotter replied that Lorrie Pearson, Director of Community Development Services, is the official Zoning Administrator. Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner, is the Acting Zoning Administrator.

Mr. Hopkins asked if the Director of Community Development Services could appoint her or himself as the Zoning Administrator. Ms. Trotter said yes. Ms. Pearson added that it does make sense sometimes to have the Director of Community Development Services also be the Zoning Administrator, especially when there is a small staff. However, it is important to have the opportunity to separate the two roles in some circumstances so that there is not any implication of political pressure to provide regulatory enforcement on something. Having maximum flexibility allows the City to respond to a variety of situations.

With there being no further questions for staff, Chair Allred opened the hearing for public input. He reviewed the rules for a public hearing.

Ms. Pearson provided instruction for City Council members in attendance prior to making a statement at the Plan Commission on this case. Since this is a case that will be heard by the City Council, if a City Council members states an opinion on the matter at hand, then they will be advised to recuse themselves from the vote in City Council.

Grace Wilken raised her hand to speak. She asked about the process for a case when it goes to Plan Commission and to City Council. She thanked the Plan Commission members for their dedication and time that they serve. Ms. Trotter explained the procedure. The Plan Commission will review and make a recommendation on the case to City Council. This case will be forwarded to the City Council meeting on Monday, September 13th. Ms. Pearson added that cases like this one require a public hearing, which is held at the Plan Commission level. City staff sends out notices to the neighbors and place legal ads in the newspaper.

There was no further public input. Chair Allred closed the public input portion of the hearing. He then opened the hearing for Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Ms. Billman asked why this amendment was being proposed. Ms. Pearson explained that there are three reasons, which are as follows:

1. Ms. Pearson is resigning from the City, and a new Zoning Administrator needs to be designated to do important things like issue building permits and Certificates of Occupancy;
2. This text amendment is part of a larger discussion amongst City Council about the list of people who are appointed versus those who should not be appointed; and
3. She felt it is a good idea to separate the two roles. Having the same person serve both roles opens the City up to have political influence or a perception of it in areas where a situation is black and white. For example, zoning interpretation is administrative and if a building meets code, then the permit should be approved. Separating the two roles eliminates any political influence that could occur when approving a building permit.

Mr. Hopkins moved that the Plan Commission forward Case No. 2426-T-21 to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation for approval. Mr. Fell seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Ms. Billman	-	Yes	Mr. Fell	-	Yes
Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes	Ms. McFarland	-	Yes
Ms. Simms	-	Yes	Mr. Weisskopf	-	Yes
Ms. Yu	-	Yes	Mr. Allred	-	Yes

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Trotter noted that Plan Case No. 2426-T-21 would be forwarded to the City Council on Monday, September 13, 2021.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

Ms. Billman said she was sorry to see Ms. Pearson leaving the City, but happy she will be working for Champaign County. Ms. Pearson said it is bittersweet. While she will miss working for the City of Urbana, she could not pass up the opportunity to work for the Forest Preserve. She felt it is her calling.

10. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. CLOSED SESSION

To Consider Security Procedures, Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(8)

Chair Allred announced that this item on the agenda was continued to the next in-person meeting of the Plan Commission.

13. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Garcia, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission