

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

DRAFT

DATE: July 9, 2020

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Zoom

MEMBERS ATTENDING REMOTELY: Dustin Allred, Tyler Fitch, Lew Hopkins, Jonah Weisskopf,

MEMBER ATTENDING AT CITY BUILDING: Andrew Fell

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jane Billman, Chenxi Yu

STAFF PRESENT: City of Urbana (Host); Kevin Garcia, Planner II; Lily Wilcock, Planner I

OTHERS ATTENDING REMOTELY: Dennis Roberts

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

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

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the June 11, 2020 regular Plan Commission meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Fell moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Mr. Allred seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Allred	-	Yes	Mr. Fell	-	Yes
Mr. Fitch	-	Yes	Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes
Mr. Weisskopf	-	Yes			

The minutes were approved by unanimous vote as written.

The minutes of the June 18, 2020 regular Plan Commission meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Fell moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Mr. Allred seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Allred	-	Yes	Mr. Fell	-	Yes
Mr. Fitch	-	Yes	Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes
Mr. Weisskopf	-	Yes			

The minutes were approved by unanimous vote as written.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2401-CP-20 – An application by the Zoning Administrator to adopt the 2020 Urbana Pedestrian Master Plan as an amendment to the 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan (as amended).

Chair Fitch re-opened the public hearing for this case. Lily Wilcock, Planner I, presented a brief follow up on the brick sidewalk recommendation and on the University Avenue and High Cross Road recommendation and noted changes to the proposed case.

City staff worked with the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) staff to figure out where the proposed language for the brick sidewalk recommendation originated. She explained that it comes from the Brick Sidewalk Ordinance in 2002 and has been part of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) since 2003. It ensures that when a brick sidewalk is repaired that it will be reconstructed in the correct manner or fashion that is designated on the map. At some time in the future, City staff and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) would consider a change to the “black-colored” designated sidewalks on the map. This would require public hearings and input. City staff added more information to the proposed Urbana Pedestrian Master Plan and cleared up some of the language regarding brick sidewalks.

Regarding the changes to the University Avenue and High Cross Road, she referred to the Recommendation Map that CCRPC staff created to show a sidewalk/path along High Cross Road connecting the Kickapoo Rail Trail, Walmart, OSF and Aldi. It includes pedestrian signalization at the intersection. The implementation tables were amended to reflect the changes.

She reviewed the options of the Plan Commission and presented City staff’s recommendation for approval.

Chair Fitch asked if any members of the Plan Commission had questions for City staff regarding the proposed Urbana Pedestrian Master Plan.

Mr. Hopkins stated that CCRPC staff added the gap to the gap map, but they have not added the recommendation to the recommendation map. He also could not find the sidewalk link in the table, which is the major issue. He only found the pedestrian signal in the table. As far as he can

tell the issues have not been fixed. He stated that he was referring to the Map 6-40 on Page 105 and Table 2 on pages 107-108. Ms. Wilcock stated that it would be a trail because it would be wider than a sidewalk. Mr. Hopkins looked in the proposed plan and found that it had not been added to the map, but was in the table. Ms. Wilcock stated that there are many maps that need to be changed and CCRPC staff might have missed one. She would ensure that the CCRPC staff receives this message.

Chair Fitch asked if the proposed language change would make it easier for the City to replace brick sidewalks with concrete. Ms. Wilcock responded that if BPAC discusses the proposed policy recommendation and it is approved by City Council, it would make it easier if a brick sidewalk is repaired to be made concrete. It would still be something that each property owner would need to agree to and would want the sidewalk to be constructed in concrete.

Chair Fitch wondered if this would save the City money. Ms. Wilcock replied that would be a great question for Public Works staff.

Mr. Hopkins asked if the proposed amendment is a plan recommendation only and would not change anything [in City Code]. Ms. Wilcock said yes.

With no further questions for City staff regarding the proposed Urbana Pedestrian Master Plan, Chair Fitch opened the case for public input.

Dennis Roberts raised his hand to speak. He mentioned that he emailed a letter to the Plan Commission members prior to the start of the meeting. The Historic East Urbana Neighborhood Association (HEUNA) spent years working on the preservation of the brick sidewalks in east and west Urbana. There are protected sidewalks in the Ordinance that was drafted in 2004/2005. HEUNA values the brick sidewalks as part of the community and even conducted their own neighborhood sidewalk restoration bricklaying project in 2004/2005. It was sponsored by Alice Englebretsen. They spent two weeks relaying brick sidewalks along Maple Street. They also had an agreement with the City (up until the City stopped funding the maintenance of the brick sidewalks) to spray the brick sidewalks with a bio-chemical to keep weeds from growing. Later when the City repaved Green Street, City staff requested that the brick sidewalks be removed. HEUNA representatives met with City staff and reached a compromise. The compromise was that all of the brick sidewalks on the north side of Green Street between Vine Street and Cottage Grove could be removed so that there could be wheelchair accessibility from Downtown Urbana to Victory Park. The HEUNA neighborhood received a Governor's Challenge Award in 2005 for the development and reconstruction of the playgrounds and facilities at Victory Park. The brick sidewalks on the south side of Green Street were to be retained. This is significant to HEUNA because the Green Street sidewalks were not in the guaranteed preservation designation for the rest of the interior part of the neighborhood. It is a concern of HEUNA to make it easier for individuals and the City to promote cementing over existing brick sidewalks. Brick sidewalks contribute to the historic quality of the City. They were laid at the turn of the century and retain their resilience today. They are a permeable choice over cement. Although they need repair or relaying in some instances, if the City would care to do such work, then the brick sidewalks would be in good shape. The City has paid quite a bit of money to have the brick sidewalks relayed on some of the interior streets of HEUNA and West Urbana neighborhoods.

He stated that the last discussion between HEUNA and the City was regarding the relaying of the brick sidewalk along the south side of the 300 block of Anderson Street. The existing sidewalk was dug up for a water project and relayed by the Illinois American Water Company. Mr. Roberts encouraged the Plan Commission to continue this case to allow HEUNA residents an opportunity to review the proposed amendment and provide comments. We should not be trying to make it easier for boards and commissions and City staff to make recommendations which would alter or affect the ability to retain the historic brick sidewalks.

Chair Fitch asked City staff to ensure that the correspondence from Mr. Roberts and other HEUNA residents be added to the record.

With no further public input, Chair Fitch closed the public hearing for the proposed Urbana Pedestrian Master Plan and opened the hearing for Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Mr. Hopkins stated that the proposed amendment is a document generated by a particular process yielding recommendations. They are not actually binding, but they have some grounding from state law for being backing for potential decisions. So, the question is, do they want to amend the Comprehensive Plan at the stage of it being revised in the near future or let the amendment happen as a result of its process and address possible changes to it later? He said that he is slightly inclined to make the amendment to the Comprehensive Plan; however, the people who created the Comprehensive Plan might find it objectionable. He felt that the Plan Commission should align the Comprehensive Plan with what they expect the City Council to actually do rather than putting through an amendment that they think likely will be inconsistent with the actions of the City Council.

Mr. Allred stated that he is inclined to give some weight to the process that was undertaken to create the plan, which included public participation as well. One would have to assume that the proposed amendment reflects to some degree what the broader community wants. He was unclear what Mr. Hopkins meant by saying that the proposed amendment may be objectionable to the City Council. Chair Fitch suggested that the Plan Commission give their best recommendation and let the City Council do what they choose to do.

Mr. Hopkins stated that the proposed amendment is simply a recommendation to change the Ordinance that is in place, and City Council would have to change the ordinance. That change would not come before the Plan Commission. The Plan Commission is caught in the middle, and it is one of the reasons why he finds disconcerting the notion of making this a compound of the Comprehensive Plan, because it implies a certain level and scope of citizen input that the proposed amendment has not actually had. If they were adopting it as a Pedestrian Plan, then he would be more inclined to say that the process generating this plan had more status. But since they would be amending the Comprehensive Plan, he was more concerned about the implications.

Chair Fitch felt the amendment was a really good plan as a whole. With laws, there is severability, where one provision can be stricken and the rest of the plan could survive. The Plan Commission could amend it; however, he is not sure of how they would amend it. he would not want to change it to reflect the current policy; instead, he would want to change the entire thing to have the City repair and preserve the brick sidewalks. This is beyond the scope of what he

would feel comfortable for the Plan Commission to do. So, he would be inclined to support the proposed amendment as is presented with a recommendation that City Council look at the brick sidewalk recommendation closely and make the technical recommendations that Mr. Hopkins noted with regards to High Cross Road and University Avenue.

Chair Fitch reviewed the options of the Plan Commission.

Mr. Hopkins asked if the City already has a pedestrian plan. Ms. Wilcock replied no.

Mr. Allred stated that there would be a conflict that is unlikely to be resolved by adopting the proposed Urbana Pedestrian Master Plan. Would the proposed plan be relooked at during the revision process of the Comprehensive Plan? Or would the proposed plan become part of the future revised Comprehensive Plan? Ms. Wilcock stated that there are no changes that would be made by adopting the proposed amendment unless City staff and/or BPAC made a recommendation to the City Council. There would be a public process and public discussion about the change; and before the change would take effect, City Council would need to approve the change. As far as the proposed amendment being incorporated into the future Comprehensive Plan, it would be up to the input process. The proposed amendment is to amend the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Allred stated that Mr. Hopkin’s concern in part was that there is a different constituency involved in pedestrian access than that concerned with aesthetics and historic preservation. These two groups would have more of a combined voice through a comprehensive process. The comprehensive process is less likely to happen if a recommendation is made to BPAC and City Council. Then it would be limited to the constituency interested in accessibility. Chair Fitch commented that a poorly maintained brick sidewalk creates a serious accessibility issue.

Mr. Hopkins stated that despite the legal practice of treating this as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, they all know that it is not. It is a separate, physical document that derives from a different process. It will not be revised and incorporated into a new comprehensive plan unless some specific process is undertaken to do so. Any amendments to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan would become defacto, if not legally, gone. He proposed that the Plan Commission forward Plan Case No. 2401-CP-20 to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation for approval with the acknowledgement of the record of discussion of this meeting that this is a Pedestrian Plan for the City of Urbana, and it is a result of a process that is focused on pedestrian access. As a result of this process, it has legitimacy, but it is not actually a change in the ordinance and not actually revisiting the comprehensiveness of the Comprehensive Plan. As long as they keep this in mind, he doesn’t believe that either side of the brick sidewalk issue has to get too worried about it. He moved that the Plan Commission forward Case No. 2401-CP-20 to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation for approval with the technical corrections only. Mr. Allred seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Allred	-	Yes	Mr. Fell	-	Yes
Mr. Fitch	-	Yes	Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes
Mr. Weisskopf	-	Yes			

The motion passed by unanimous vote. Mr. Garcia noted that this case would be forwarded to the Committee of the Whole on Monday, July 20, 2020.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

8. NEW BUSINES

There was none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Wilcock reported on the following:

- Prior to COVID-19, the City of Urbana hired Andrea Ruedi as the Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development to start managing and handling the process to create a new Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Wilcock has been assigned to assist Ms. Ruedi with some of the work as of July 1st. In addition, they hired two new planning interns to help with some background research on data and to starting the stakeholder engagement process.

Mr. Garcia reported on the following:

- Champaign County Regional Planning Commission received about a \$400,000.00 grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation to do a comprehensive land use inventory for the City of Urbana, the City of Champaign and the Village of Savoy. It should help with the City's Comprehensive planning process. We do not currently have an up-to-date land use inventory in the City of Urbana. We will be using a form of the land based classification system that was created around 2000 by the American Planning Association. Mr. Hopkins asked Mr. Garcia to email the Plan Commission members with a link to the land use classifications.
- The Bicycle Wayfinding Plan that the Plan Commission reviewed and forwarded to the Urbana City Council will be reviewed by the Committee of the Whole on Monday, July 20, 2020.
- Mr. Garcia was promoted to Principal Planner for the City of Urbana. He had been servicing as Interim Planning Manager since October of 2019 when Lorrie Pearson became the Community Development Services Director. Now he is official and begins a three-month probationary period for his new position.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Garcia, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission