

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: December 8, 2016

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Urbana City Building
Council Chambers
400 South Vine Street
Urbana, IL 61801

MEMBERS PRESENT: Barry Ackerson, Andrew Fell, Tyler Fitch, Lew Hopkins, Christopher Stohr, David Trail, Daniel Turner

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Dannie Otto

STAFF PRESENT: Lorrie Pearson, Planning Manager; Kevin Garcia, Planner II; Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant II; Craig Shonkwiler, Assistant City Engineer

OTHERS PRESENT: Annie Adams, Cynthia Hoyle, Dave Monk, Susan Taylor

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

Chair Fitch called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. Roll call was taken and there was a quorum present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the September 8, 2016 regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Fell moved to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Turner seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote as written.

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. 2272-CP-16 – An application by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to adopt the 2016 Urbana Bicycle Master Plan as an amendment to the 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan (as amended).

Chair Fitch opened the public hearing for this case. Kevin Garcia, Planner II, presented the staff report to the Urbana Plan Commission. He began by presenting background information on the Draft Plan including the planning process. He mentioned the goals and objectives of the 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan that were relevant to the proposed update. He provided a brief summary of each chapter and discussed the changes that were being proposed. He read the options of the Plan Commission and presented the Urbana Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission's (BPAC) and the City staff's recommendations for approval.

Chair Fitch asked if the Plan Commission members had questions for City staff.

Mr. Trail inquired as to who made the changes to the proposed plan. Mr. Garcia replied that it was a joint effort by the City staff, the Steering Committee and BPAC.

Mr. Hopkins stated that it seemed the most future contentions around the implementation of the proposed update are likely to be loss of on-street parking and reduction in vehicle lanes. If this is the case and if the proposed plan is to be useful, then it seems one ought to be able to find where these would occur. Craig Shonkwiler, Assistant City Engineer, replied that it is noted in the Appendix where there would be on-street parking removal. However, he believed that language could be added in the body of the proposed plan update where it would be more findable. He noted that there was not much more on-street parking left that was scheduled to be removed. Most of it has already been done. There was some left on Green Street between Lincoln Avenue and Race Street. Mr. Hopkins felt it would be good to annotate future removals on the map.

Mr. Turner asked if there was a time frame for when the plan would be updated again in the future. Mr. Shonkwiler recalled a section in the plan that recommends it be updated every five years. They envision the next update to be less of a rewrite and hope that it will take the City to the platinum or diamond level Bicycle Friendly Community.

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

Dave Monk approached the Plan Commission to speak in favor of the proposed update. He stated that the proposed update would be good for urban sites; however, it would not do much for the long run bicycle trails to places such as Danville and Decatur. The Katy Trail in Missouri has been so popular between St. Louis and Kansas City that they are planning to expand the trail. The Katy Trail has provided additional income from museums, bicycle shops and restaurants getting more business. Thirty-five thousand miles of railbeds being networked with bicycle trails has saved railroads for future use.

Therefore, he would like to see cities think outside of their jurisdictions. How could bicyclists get to Springfield or Chicago? Cities should think about bicycle routes for the future. If cities have good long range trails, then they would be augmented and financing would be available to implement those long range trails.

Mr. Trail commented that the fastest way to get funding for the railways to be converted to recreational trails is to get a creditable proposal on the table for passenger rail. Mr. Monk replied that funding comes from both parties – the railroads and from the federal government for bicycle trail conversions. Railroads are only considering main lines, so fortunately the networks for bicycle trails are likely to stay around for a long time.

Cynthia Hoyle approached the Plan Commission to speak in favor of the proposed plan. She stated that she was the Interim Chair of the BPAC and also worked on the Steering Committee involved in the proposed updated plan. She felt it was a good plan and would help the City move forward. While we may lack trails, the City of Urbana has a really good bicycle system that we need to finish building out. We have the distinction of being the first gold Bicycle Friendly Community in the state.

While there are many more aggressive ideas she would have liked to see in the plan with regards to infrastructure development, we cannot delay a plan with the idea in mind that we are going to keep updating it with the latest infrastructure designs because it is a rapidly changing field in this country. The proposed update is a great plan that they would like to start implementing, and they can revisit the plan in five years and add in the ideas that are just now receiving approval from the federal government.

Mr. Stohr asked about the educational component for adult drivers to learn more about bicycle courtesy. Ms. Hoyle replied that the strength of the education program is what helped to catapult the City to the gold level. This past year, they used part of the Safe Routes to School grant to bring in a seminar to certify more lead cycling instructors through the League of the American Bicyclists. They now have 9 instructors, so they plan to expand the education offerings.

To educate drivers of vehicles would take additional monies. There is a question on the Illinois State driver's test about bicyclists. There is an online quiz available. Many drivers do not understand that bicyclists have the right to use the road. It takes education and enforcement working together.

Mr. Ackerson asked about the Zip Bike. Would this factor into the education component? He believed this could serve as a catalyst for increasing awareness, then an increase in awareness can trigger education. Ms. Hoyle stated that they would love to do more community outreach.

There is no grant funding or source of revenue to do community wide education campaigns. We desperately need a staff person to coordinate the things that we do such as Bike Month.

Mr. Hopkins wondered if going after grants to fund education should be part of the proposed plan. Ms. Hoyle stated that BPAC could take a look and make recommendations to the City Council. The proposed plan does reference revenue sources, but it does not list specific grants to pursue. Mr. Garcia added that on Page 178, one of the goals under the Implementation them is to “secure funding and implement bicycle improvements”. He noted that having an up-to-date plan is a useful tool for pursuing some of the grants.

Mr. Hopkins responded that the Plan Commission was about to send the proposed plan to the City Council. He felt it was important to educate vehicle drivers how to share the road with bicyclists. Ms. Hoyle pointed out that there is language in the proposed plan pursuing funding.

Annie Adams approached the Plan Commission to speak in favor. She stated that she serves on BPAC. She encouraged the Plan Commission to forward the proposed plan update to the City Council with a recommendation for approval so they can begin to work on getting grants. BPAC will continue to make improvements to the plan in the future. We will continue to see changes in cycling.

With no further public input, Chair Fitch closed this portion of the hearing and opened it up for Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Mr. Hopkins moved that the Plan Commission forward Plan Case No. 2272-CP-16 to the City Council with a recommendation for approval and that this update would supersede the 2008 Bicycle Master Plan as an element of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Turner seconded the motion.

Mr. Trail stated that he planned to vote against the motion because he did not feel that the plan was ambitious enough.

Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Fell	-	Yes	Mr. Fitch	-	Yes
Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes	Mr. Stohr	-	Yes
Mr. Trail	-	No	Mr. Turner	-	Yes
Mr. Ackerson	-	Yes			

The motion passed by a vote of 7 to 1.

Mr. Ackerson stated that he had sympathy with Mr. Trail’s concerns. He did not want to hold up the plan; however, he encouraged everyone to think bigger.

Mr. Garcia noted that this case would be presented to the Committee of the Whole on Monday, December 12, 2016 and forwarded to City Council on Monday, December 19, 2016.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Cynthia Hoyle and Annie Adams approached the Plan Commission to speak about educating drivers in sharing the road with bicyclists. Ms. Hoyle stated that one of the best ways to educate drivers was to get them out on the road on a bicycle. They organized what is called, “The Lunar Cycle Ride”. She invited the Plan Commission members to join them on the next scheduled ride on Monday, December 12, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. Meet at the bicycle shelter in front of the Common Ground Food Co-op. You can arrive earlier if you would like to have your bicycle checked out. This particular date, the ride will include viewing the lights on Candlestick Lane. They design the routes for these rides to show people that you can get places on a bike. They also incorporate getting a drink during or at the end of the rides.

They also have what is called, “A Full Moon Ride”. She did not believe that those were still going on since the weather changed.

Mr. Ackerson commented that Pennsylvania Avenue is a major bike corridor into campus. He noticed that when there are streets that bicyclists most commonly use, most vehicle drivers will accommodate them. They become use the road being a common pathway for both forms of transportation.

Ms. Adams noted that there is a different group for their 5-mile, Lunar Cycle Ride, than there is for the 10-mile, Full Moon Ride. They have to educate bicyclists on how to ride in a group with the 5-mile ride before the ride begins. These rides happen once a month if the roads are clear. Ms. Hoyle added that the event is available on Facebook

10. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorrie Pearson, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission