

On Thursday, September 17, 2020, at 7:00 p.m., a regular meeting of the Plan Commission was called to order in-person and via Zoom. Roll Call. Present: Chair Rene Morris (Zoom), Doug Freed, Aurelio Gallardo, Steve Munson, Jamie Schwingle (Zoom) and Joe Strabala-Bright. Absent: Skip McCloud.

Also present were: Planners Dustin Wolff, Brian Carranza and Mark Sauer of Mead and Hunt, Building and Zoning Superintendent Amanda Schmidt, Attorney Tim Zollinger, City Manager Scott Shumard, Alderman Jim Wise, Alderman Retha Elston, City Clerk Teri Sathoff, and Assistant City Clerk Monique Castillo.

Munson made a motion to approve the minutes from August 20, 2020 as presented. The motion was seconded by Freed. Voting – Ayes: Freed, Gallardo, Munson, Schwingle, Strabala-Bright and Morris. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Schmidt noted Council approved the recommendation to annex the Steelton Subdivision – Group 9.

Chair Morris began to open a Public Hearing at 7:02 p.m. to hear the request to rezone with a special use to allow for a cell tower at 2601 E Lincolnway/Sterling Moose Family Center. Zollinger noted at the petitioners request we need to table this Public Hearing to the next regular meeting. He suggested we hear comments and table the discussion to avoid the process and fees of having to republish the public hearing.

Chair Morris opened a Public Hearing at 7:03 p.m. to hear the request to rezone with a special use to allow for a cell tower at 2601 E Lincolnway/Sterling Moose Family Center.

Wolff noted this is going to be a 70ft tall mountable structure used to accommodate US Cellular panel antennae.

McCloud entered the meeting via Zoom at 7:04 p.m.

Schmidt noted several e-mails were received against the cell tower mainly because it is adjacent to a residential area.

Janna Groharing, Sterling Main Street, resides on Sanborn Street and she is against the tower as well.

Kenyon Thompson, Sterling Moose Administrator, stated he understands everyone's negative stance but this tower will be a financial benefit to his facility. In his opinion, this tower should not have any negative impact on the residential community.

Zollinger reminded the commission they should include, in the motion to table, this is a continuation from the 9/17/2020 public hearing.

With no further discussion by staff, commissioners or guests, Chair Morris noted publications were made, fees were paid, notification requirements were met, signage notifying the public of the hearing was placed. There were several phone calls and e-mails received in objection to the tower.

The Public Hearing was closed at 7:10 p.m.

Munson made a motion to table to the next regular meeting on October 15, 2020, the continuation of this Public Hearing, to hear the request to rezone with a special use to allow for a cell tower at 2601 E Lincolnway/Sterling Moose Family Center. The motion was seconded by Stabala-Bright. Voting – Ayes: Gallardo, McCloud, Munson, Schwingle, Strabala-Bright, Morris and Freed. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Chair Morris opened a Public Hearing at 7:10 p.m. to hear the recommendation to Annex/Zone property contiguous to the city; Steelton Subdivision – Group 10.

Zollinger noted this is the continuation through this subdivision and the end is close. He reminded the commission we had to do it this way to make sure all properties were contiguous. Finally, he stated, as with the previous annexations/rezones, all properties have sewer access and pre-annexation agreements stating they would hook on when they became contiguous.

Wolff noted, there were some zoning issues with this group as some of the properties have split zoning and the property that sits at the corner of Oak Ave and W 9<sup>th</sup> Street is a church. Wolff noted an SR-8 zoning does allow for religious institutions by right. Therefore we can utilize an SR-8 zoning here and still keep all the properties legal and conforming.

With no further discussion by staff, commissioners or guests, Chair Morris noted publications were made, fees were not applicable, notification requirements were met, signage notifying the public of the hearing was not applicable. There were no phone calls. There were no written comments were received.

The Public Hearing was closed at 7:14 p.m.

Freed made a motion to approve the Annexation and Rezoning of the properties contiguous to the City, in the Steelton Subdivision – Group 10. The motion was seconded by Munson. Voting – Ayes: McCloud, Munson, Schwingle, Strabala-Bright, Morris, Gallardo and Freed. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Wolff, Carranza and Sauer gave a brief overview of the Comprehensive Plan to date and what they hope to accomplish in the next couple of meetings.

Sauer explained tonight we will focus on the East Lincolnway corridor and the case studies for that area. He presented a slide show to elaborate on the possible transformations

from rundown big box retail shopping centers to new schools or recreational centers. There were several pictures of completed transformations and the approximate costs related to the completion of these transformations.

Wolff noted another, more cost effective transformation option would be to change the façade of existing buildings such as the Northland Mall.

The Mead and Hunt group shared stories of what attracts people to gather. People are fascinated with what is happening behind the scenes. An example of this is in Milwaukee where a brewery has a conveyor belt, enclosed by glass and you can literally watch the product moving from one end of the building to the other. This draws a huge crowd daily. Sauer wondered how fascinating it would have been to see the works at Northwestern Steel and Wire.

McCloud noted the proposed plans gave a great perspective of what could be but inquired on the lack of hotels in the plans. Wolff agreed there is a great need for hotels but wonders if this is the right area for them. He thanked McCloud for the reminder to incorporate hotels into the planning.

Sauer reviewed the Downtown Riverfront specific area plan. He noted this area is 150 acres of land with 2 specific areas; the downtown core and the riverfront. It is recognizably different from other areas and has vast opportunity for development. He also noted a pedestrian crossing is vital to the area and getting the Railroad Company to grasp this concept may be the biggest challenge.

There was a brief discussion on the buildable opportunities in the downtown core. By building in this area we will accomplish the goals set forth of being place oriented, connected and improving density. Reaching out to local business leaders/employers as possible investors and collaborating with Greater Sterling Development Corporation and the City would be ideal to see this plan to its fruition. Participation in several of the case studies proved the area business leaders/employers take great pride in their community and want to be supportive of its growth.

There was a brief discussion on connectivity and one-way pairs. Case studies prove there is a high demand to de-couple the one-way pairs. However, Shumard noted there was a survey sent to the residents on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and the majority of the surveys sent back were against de-coupling. Strabala-Bright noted for the sake of the Riverfront this is a project we simply must see through, as it is imperative to gain access to the area. He further noted, nobody welcomes change until after it is done and then it just becomes natural.

Alderman Wise noted many of the one-ways are too narrow to convert to two-lane traffic especially 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue - which was used as an example for conversation.

Sauer reviewed land use and ways to better utilize existing land. He stated approximately 40% of the current land is not taxable/sustainable, 50% is private/industrial commercial business, 8% is residential and the remainder belongs to regional business. It is vital to

increase the residential and regional business numbers to anticipate more tax base. We need to patronize establishments and increase property values.

Sauer said looking into the future, we would like to see a 5% increase to the residential land use and add planned mixed use as it is multi-functional and could include housing which would help meet the goal to increase our residential numbers.

There was a brief overview of the community visions from 2011, 2018 to current and what the driving factors of these visions may be such as density, recreation or use. Sauer asked the commission to think about what they hoped the lasting impression of Sterling would be and what people might see when researching Sterling on the internet.

Sauer asked the commission if they could pick just one project to see completed, which one would it be. Strabala-Bright stated he would like to see more density with added residential but feels decoupling the one-ways is imperative to accomplishing this goal. Janna Groharing, Sterling Main Street, agreed with Strabala-Bright but would rather like Wallace Street to be more accessible. Alderman Wise and Munson agreed adding more residential units is key to Sterling's growth. Munson added there are several employment opportunities but undesirable housing options. Groharing noted we do not need new residential units but rather rehabilitate current residential units.

Wolff added we need to have specific visions, goals and plans to see these thoughts come to fruition.

Strabala-Bright added it is important to continue to tell Sterling's story as people crave history. He can see a great value in the sculpture idea that was presented in the proposed plans.

McCloud feels there is not enough interest for private development, which is what is needed to see these projects through. Wolff noted this was a great point and reminded the commission we need to reach out to these private sectors and get them to understand how critical it is to band together to see results.

Munson noted this planning process has been exciting, inspiring and is very doable. He thanked the Mead and Hunt group for all the work put into these plans thus far.

The next Plan Commission meeting is October 15, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. We will continue the Public Hearing for cell tower at 2601 E. Lincolnway, have a Public Hearing; Steelton Group 11 and continue discussion with the Comprehensive Plan. Hopefully we will be able to meet in person.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Monique Castillo  
Assistant City Clerk