

## Planning Commission Meeting Notes

4/12/2018

Present: Blake Musser, Paulette Williams-Thomas, Adam Holder, Stephen Lafferty, Jim Berbert, Andrea Winter

Absent: Bill Green, Nicole Bauer, Matt Moyer

Others Present: Lowell Crow, Steve Cox, Randy Bukas, Jack Carey

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by Chairman Stephen Lafferty.

No Public Comments

Motion was made by Musser and seconded by Winter to approve the minutes of March 8 2018. Motion was approved by voice.

Approval of the agenda. Approved by voice vote.

Jack Carey from the Freeport Park District gave a presentation on the park district's desire to update their Comprehensive Plan. Their Comp Plan is also out of date. They are concerned with "islands" in the city without neighborhood parks. He stated the 3<sup>rd</sup> ward is an area with islands. The Park District and City are working together on the Blight Reduction Program to assemble a favorable target area in the King Center/FACC area. As properties are acquired, there will be an attempt to assemble them to develop a park space. This may require abandoning some right of ways.

Lowell Crow stated the City has received \$25,000 Land Bank Grant to purchase properties in the Third Ward. The Park District would like to assemble 7 acres for the Park. A second area they are looking at is the West section of the City, across from the golf course. They are looking are 7 acres between Loras Drive and Stephenson Street.

There was also general discussion on the current and proposed Bike/Hike path and Bike Lanes. Carey stated the Park District is willing to work with the City on building and maintaining trails.

Carey stated a big challenge is the State of Illinois. The state proposes to increase Homestead and Senior Exemptions. This would impact their ability to levy taxes for the support they need. He stated NewCorp has succeeded to bring business and labor to the City and increase the value of the property. Once the organization is up and running, the money to fund the organization cannot be pulled out of it.

Another area that needs a parcel is the area near the Van Buren Bridge. At one time there was considerations to create a County-wide Forest Preserve District. If it's created, it would take the trail funding off the Park District and put it on a county wide bases. The Jane Addams

Association has 400 acres to turn over to a County Forest Preserve. Carey stated that there is a movement to create off road bicycling facilities.

Lowell Crow discussed the difference between a Flood Plain and a Floodway. The February 2018 flood reached 16 feet 2 inches and flooded areas that never seen flooding before. A Floodway is the area where the water flows, with current, once it crests its banks. It's where the natural flow of the river would flow. You cannot build in a floodway. You can build in a Flood Plain, as long as you don't impede the waters flow. Most buildings are built on stilts. It appears the State is interested in trying to remove obstacles in the floodway East of the Pecatonica River. No one is going to be forced to sell or move. It is hoped to give the residents options as to where they can move. The State has set aside approximately \$800,000 for Freeport. Right now, approximately 20-25% of the houses in the Third Ward are vacant.

Steve Cox gave a presentation on the need for a Solar Ordinance (see attached handout). He encouraged the Planning Commission members to look at the SolSmart.org website. After the presentation, Planning Commission members discussed pursuing a stop gap ordinance to allow a solar farm in a "M" district or do a full-blown review. There is a company interested in developing a solar farm on State Route 75. The Planning Commission members present stated they would be interested in moving forward with solar. Cox stated he would have something out to them next Wednesday. Randy Bukas stated he will send a copy of a renewable energy article that appeared in the ICMA PM magazine.

Crow stated that Bukas will be the lead staff person to the Planning Commission. Staff duties are being divided up. Nancy McDonald will have the Historical Preservation Committee and Zoning Board of Appeals. Ben Fritz will be the staff person to the Building Commission. Crow stated Bukas is a member of the American Planning Association and has helped develop Comprehensive Plans in other communities.

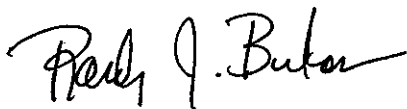
There were no Public comments

Musser moved, Berbert seconded, a motion to adjourn. Motion approved on voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm

The next scheduled meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 10, 2018

Respectfully Submitted,



Randy J. Bukas  
Finance Director